

TEACHING BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF
LANGUAGE TEACHING ASSISTANTS

by

Kevin Kau

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STATEMENT OF THESIS APPROVAL

The following faculty members served as the supervisory committee chair and members for the thesis of Kevin Kau.

Dates at right indicate the members' approval of the thesis.

<u>MaryAnn Christison</u> , Chair	<u>4/22/13</u> Date Approved
<u>Fernando Rubio</u> , Member	<u>4/22/13</u> Date Approved
<u>Adrian Palmer</u> , Member	<u>4/22/13</u> Date Approved

The thesis has also been approved by Edward Rubin

Chair of the Department/School/College of Linguistics

and by David M. Kieda, Dean of The Graduate School.

ABSTRACT

Teaching assistantships were originally based on an apprenticeship model, where teaching assistants (TAs) would work with a professor by performing tasks such as grading papers, leading discussion groups, or preparing class. However, in the field of second language education, more and more novice and inexperienced TA find themselves teaching and managing an entire course themselves due to increased demand of second language (L2) teachers at U.S. universities. This study reports on the results of teachers beliefs and practices of two distinct populations of L2 TAs: those who self-identify as TAs and plan on making language teaching part of their future career, and TAs who do not plan on teaching language as part of their future career. Previous research has shown that teaching beliefs have a significant impact on how teachers teach. Given the self-identification of students into groups, it is hypothesized that there will be differences between the teaching beliefs and practices between these two groups. Little research has looked specifically at these two populations.

This study looked at the teaching beliefs and practices of these two populations through the use of a survey. A 4-point Likert scale survey with matched teaching belief and teacher practice statements was used to compare the self-reported beliefs and practices of the study populations. Classroom observations were conducted on two of the TAs. Following this, any observed inconsistencies between survey data and actual observation were addressed in an interview.

Results of this study showed that there was no significant difference between the self-reported beliefs and practices of the two groups. However, the career group had higher rates of correlation than the noncareer group, indicating that the career group was developing and growing, while the noncareer group may not be. Classroom observations and interviews revealed that there were many inconsistencies between the self-reported beliefs and practices of TAs, and actual classroom practices, indicating that while the career group is questioning their teaching beliefs and practices more than the noncareer group, both groups are still novice teachers.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Institutions of higher education across the United States are experiencing a greater increase in the number of applications from international students (Open Doors, 2011). Most of the students who apply are well qualified academically and have tested high enough on a standardized English language test to meet admission requirements for the universities. However, there is an increasing number of applicants who have fulfilled the academic requirements for admission (i. e., they have high enough academic GPAs from their home country institutions) but have not scored high enough on a standardized English language test, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), or International English Testing System (IELTS), in order to be admitted to a U.S. institution of higher education *unconditionally*. In the past, these applicants would be required to improve their English language test scores before being admitted as international students.

In recent years, businesses have gotten involved in English language teaching as private companies have begun to realize that teaching English is a multibillion dollar industry. Companies, such as Kaplan Global Pathways and Berlitz International, have begun to develop partnerships with universities. These companies recruit international students who meet the necessary academic standards for admission but perhaps do not

meet the standards for English language proficiency. Nevertheless, because of the partnership agreement these students are allowed *conditional* admission to one of the universities. Having private businesses recruit international students for American universities — is one of the most significant trends in international education in recent years, as American colleges [are] adopt[ing] new, more aggressive, and more strategic approaches to foreign student recruitment . . .” (Fischer, 2010). If the international students recruited by companies are able to raise their English proficiency test scores during a set amount of time (typically three semesters), they are unconditionally admitted into the partnership universities as international students. These students ~~may~~ not have qualified on their own for admission to the university because of language difficulties, incomplete course work, or limited study skills” (Fischer, 2010). These recruitment programs are typically called ~~pathway~~ “pathway programs,” because they provide a pathway for international students to achieve unconditional admission status at U.S. universities.

On the surface, this kind of partnership between private business and institutions of higher education (IHE) in the U.S. seems to be mutually beneficial for both parties. Universities increase their enrollment of international students, who pay more than local students in tuition, and the private businesses collect fees from every student they recruit into the program. It appears to be a financial win/win situation for everyone involved. With the recent economic crisis and the current trend of slashing university budgets and funding, universities are finding it more and more attractive to make up for monetary deficits by allowing academically qualified international students a conditional admission option. Although these kinds of programs appear beneficial to all parties involved, they are still very new; consequently, there are likely to be some problems associated with this

type of admission that may not be realized yet.

One initial problem that has already arisen is the fact that university units that house the ESL programs are suddenly faced with a marked increase in enrollments of ESL students. Some universities have seen ESL enrollments increase two to three fold over a very short period of time. At one specific Research 1 University, enrollment due to a pathways program has increased from an average of 28 students per semester, to 70 a semester (M. Richards, personal communication, December 12, 2011¹). This influx of ESL students requires universities to find more instructors to teach the ESL courses.

One option for staffing additional courses that is open to universities is to seek applications from qualified ESL teachers (i.e., teachers who have degrees and experience teaching). Another option is to hire more graduate teaching assistants (TAs). Courses in English as a second language (ESL) programs at universities are often taught by TAs who are receiving degrees in applied linguistics, second language (L2) pedagogy, or education, and who generally see language and English language teaching and research, in particular, as part of their future career. In addition, teaching is an excellent medium in order to apply linguistic research and theory. However, because of the sudden increase in ESL students from these pathway programs, there are often times not enough applied linguistics TAs to teach the ESL classes, or the unit in charge of staffing the ESL courses may have a different orientation towards the need for staffing courses with qualified instructors.

The increase in enrollment has created a situation wherein some universities use TAs who may not have had training as ESL teachers, training that may include taking an

¹ Global Pathways program advisor at the University of Utah.

L2 methodology class, having experience in teaching in general or teaching ESL, or more importantly, having an interest in teaching language as a career choice. However, teaching assistantships are popular with graduate students because they often provide a full tuition benefit, plus a stipend. Consequently, even graduate students with little interest in teaching ESL, find a teaching assistantship attractive. Using TAs to staff ESL courses is attractive with universities because TAs are also less costly and allow for more budgetary flexibility than fulltime, qualified teachers. By broadening the pool of TAs to include noncareer oriented TAs, universities experience fewer problems in having sufficient TAs to staff the ever-increasing numbers in ESL courses.

Previous research has shown that teaching beliefs have a significant impact on how teachers teach (Borg, 2003; Clark & Peterson, 1986). TAs who have not been trained in second language (L2) instruction or may not be interested in L2 teaching or even teaching in the future may hold beliefs about language learning, teaching, and their learners that are quite different from TAs who do not share these characteristics. If beliefs do influence practice as research suggests, then it may be important to look at noncareer oriented ESL teachers' beliefs and how they approach teaching in their classrooms. Noncareer oriented TAs do not receive the guided experience in teaching and the required coursework related to teaching languages; consequently, they may not develop a practice that combines theory and practice with a focus on learner outcomes. In addition, because the noncareer oriented ESL TAs do not see language teaching as a part of their future careers, they may not be invested in improving their skills as teachers.

In order to investigate the relationship between teacher beliefs and beliefs about practices, this study uses an online questionnaire (see Appendix A). To obtain

information about classroom practices and the relationship between beliefs and practices, this study uses classroom observations. Interviews were used to gather data about TAs beliefs and practices that could not be answered via the online questionnaire and the classroom observations. The research questions appear below. Two TAs, 1 career-oriented and 1 noncareer oriented, were observed (see Appendix B for the observation instrument) and interviews were conducted with follow up questions.

The following seven research questions motivate this study.

Research Questions

1. What are the teaching beliefs and practices of language TAs as measured on an online questionnaire?
2. Do career and noncareer oriented TAs differ in self-reported teaching beliefs and practices as measured through an online questionnaire?
3. How do career and noncareer oriented TAs differ in self-reported teaching beliefs and practices as measured through an online questionnaire?
4. Is there a correlation between the self-reported beliefs and self-reported practices of graduate teaching assistants as reported on an online questionnaire?
5. What are the teaching practices of TAs as measured using a lesson-planning taxonomy?
6. Are the self-reported beliefs and beliefs about teaching practices of language TAs consistent with classroom observation?
7. How do language TA beliefs about the role of the teacher and student affect how they teach?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been considerable research into how teaching beliefs influence teacher practices and how these beliefs and practices change with experience and education.

Richardson (1996) believes that there are three sources that help to form teachers' beliefs:

1) personal experiences in general and with teaching, 2) experience with schooling and instruction as students, and 3) knowledge of subject matter and language pedagogy.

There is little debate about the importance that these three things have on shaping teachers' teaching beliefs. Thus, it is easy to see how ESL course instructors who have little knowledge of language acquisition and language pedagogy, may have different beliefs about teaching and may teach quite differently from ESL course instructors who have taken classes specifically in second language acquisition and L2 pedagogy.

Entering beliefs, or the teaching beliefs that preservice teachers have when they begin teaching, can change dramatically over time. Often times, these entering beliefs are based solely on personal experience and are ~~highly~~ idealistic, loosely formulated, deeply seated, and traditional" (Richardson, 2003, p. 6). In addition, there are many parts to these entering beliefs that are deemed detrimental to teaching (Peacock, 2001). However, these entering teaching beliefs do change over time and as a result of exposure to theoretical concepts and practical ideas introduced in teacher education programs. Borg

(2003) supports the idea that even though entering beliefs may be hard to change, teacher education programs can help facilitate change.

Essentially there are two ways in which beliefs change—through experience and through education (i.e., coursework devoted to L2 teaching). While entering beliefs are primarily based on personal educational experiences related to how one has been taught and cultural expectations for teaching and are not fully developed, it is true that teacher education programs that expose students to methodology classes and classroom based research can and do change these entering beliefs. Before proceeding to investigate the relationship of beliefs and practice, it is important to try to define what exactly teacher beliefs are.

Teacher Beliefs

In the past there has been much debate about what teacher beliefs actually are. *Beliefs* have been defined by a variety of similar terms, such as values, attitudes, theories, and internal mental process (Pajares, 1992). What makes defining teaching beliefs difficult is that the process of defining beliefs encompasses many different ideas and concepts and even terms for talking about the same concepts.

Kagan (1990) uses the term “teacher cognition,” in place of teacher beliefs. Even though this term can be just as vague, he defines it as “any of the following: 1) pre/in-service teachers’ self-reflections, 2) beliefs and knowledge about teaching, students, and content and 3) awareness of problem solving endemic to classroom teaching” (p. 421). Borg (2003) tries to address the problem of vagueness much like Kagan by using *teacher beliefs* as an overarching term. Borg defines teacher beliefs as “beliefs, knowledge,

theories, attitudes, images, assumptions, metaphors, conceptions, perspectives about teaching, teachers, learning, students, subject matter, curricular, materials, instructional activities, [and] self” (p. 82). Because there is no “official” definition of what teacher beliefs are and what they encompass, I will define teacher beliefs in this study as “understanding[s] about teaching, which are subjective and idiosyncratic” (Richardson, 1996, p. 104). This definition, much like Borg’s and Kagan’s, takes an overarching approach to defining teacher beliefs and tries to capture the multifaceted roles that contribute to teachers’ beliefs and philosophies of what their role as teachers should be.

Teacher Experience

There have been a variety of studies that have shown that exposure to methodology classes and research, have an effect on teacher beliefs (Richardson, 1996; Pajares, 1992); however, teaching experience also greatly affects a teacher’s beliefs, which in turn can affect how a teacher conducts class. Xing (2009) found that teachers with more experience showed a higher positive correlation between teaching beliefs and teaching behaviors. The more experience teachers had, the more likely it was that their behaviors in class matched their beliefs. Xing (2009) also found that teachers with less experience expressed a lower correlation between beliefs and actual practices.

Conclusion

The initial review of the literature suggests that there is little debate among scholars and researchers about the role of teaching beliefs in influencing classroom behaviors. Teacher beliefs are a great part of who a teacher is. These beliefs serve to

inform how a teacher teaches a class and what a teacher expects from his or her students. Teacher beliefs represent the core values of teachers—their philosophy on how content should be taught and what students should do to learn. For preservice teachers, these beliefs are based primarily on personal experiences as learners, and are typically not grounded in any theory or support from research studies. Teacher education programs with courses that expose preservice teachers to L2 methodology, pedagogy, and research studies in second language acquisition and education, serve to shape teachers' beliefs so that they become grounded and rooted in theory and research.

Despite the substantial research base on teacher beliefs, there have been few studies that have looked at the beliefs of noncareer oriented TAs who have had no prior teaching experience, teacher education coursework, and who may not be interested in teaching or teaching language at all. Research has shown that entering teachers' beliefs change with experience and education. However, how do beliefs change for noncareer oriented ESL TAs who have had no experience or teacher education? How do their beliefs influence practice? What underpins their decision-making processes as they conduct their classes? Can they articulate what their teacher beliefs are?

Traditionally, in most ESL programs at the university level, ESL courses are taught either by full time faculty with degrees in L2 teaching, training in TESOL or applied linguistics, or TAs seeking graduate degrees in TESOL, applied linguistics, or education. However, universities with collaborative partnerships with private companies that recruit international students experience such tremendous growth in ESL enrollment that it puts pressure on universities to hire more ESL teachers than were previously needed. Some universities are using TAs who may not have any background in teaching

ESL, nor any desire to teach ESL as part of their future careers. Because this is a very new phenomenon, little to no research exists about this specific topic.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is a mixed methods study, using both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to answer the research questions and uncover information about Teaching Assistants' (TAs') teaching beliefs and ideologies and to determine to what degree TAs follow these beliefs and ideologies in their teaching. The research questions for this study focus on how data correlate between career and noncareer oriented TAs. A mixed methods study is defined as a "class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17). Thus, by combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, different types of research questions can be answered. Also, mixed methods studies have the potential to overcome problems that might be present with any single type of study (Sechrest & Sidana, 1995).

Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data will be collected using a questionnaire, or survey. Survey research is one of the most common types of data collection tools. Survey research involves the use of questionnaires and/or surveys to gather data about people's beliefs

and behaviors. The method was pioneered in the 1930s and 1940s by sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld and has been extended into educational contexts (Jeřábek, 2001). A questionnaire was created to collect background information as well as information on teaching beliefs and beliefs about teaching practices.

Data were collected on participant background information related to years teaching, language experience, and number of courses taken in methodology and pedagogy. The background information was used to assist the researcher in identifying the variables that may be important in determining group membership.

Questions were constructed using a 4-point Likert scale. Space for additional comments was also included. The questionnaire was given to a sample of opportunity (i. e., all language TAs at one university). The individual items on the questionnaire were selected from the questionnaire used in Xing (2009). Thirty items were selected—15 items representing belief statements and 15 representing beliefs about practice. Five areas were represented with three items in each area. Items in the survey for Xing (2009) were created based on a series of pilot studies designed to improve the reliability and construct validity of the instrument. For example, in order to improve reliability, individual items were repeated in random order throughout the pilot survey. Items that provoked different responses from individuals were eliminated. A decision was made to include general language-teaching terms if those terms had been included in the items selected from Xing (2009).

Items on the questionnaire for the current study focused the sample population on what their teaching beliefs were and asked them to self-report on their teaching behaviors. The questionnaire consists of belief and practice statement pairs in five

categories: grammar instruction, corrective feedback, the role of the teacher, classroom interaction, and planning and conducting lessons. To obscure the purpose of this study from participants, the ordering for belief and practice statements was randomized, with distracter questions placed throughout. Participants were shown one statement at a time and were unable to go back and review previous statements. This 56-item questionnaire (see Appendix A) was placed on Survey Monkey, and graduate TAs who teach second and foreign language classes at a major Research 1 (R1) university in the United States were asked to participate.

Questionnaires allow researchers to collect large amounts of data in a relatively short period of time and can reach a wider population. Also, closed questions using a Likert scale allow for easier analysis. Research Questions 1- 4 can be answered using the information from the questionnaires. However, questionnaires do not allow for in depth examination of a topic because the questions are framed from the researcher's and not the participants' perspectives. Also, with a predefined set of possible answers, respondents are not able to freely express their opinions (Nunan, 1992). For these reasons, a qualitative component is included in this study.

Qualitative Data Collection

Haverkamp, Morrow, and Ponterotto (2005) state that — . . . [q]uantitative research, like photography, excels at producing images characterized by precision. Qualitative research, like portraiture, can offer a glimpse of what resides beneath” (p. 124). Qualitative data was collected from two TAs using a combination of methods—videotaped class observations using a scoring rubric (see Appendix B) and interviews

using a guided recall protocol. The purpose for using a scoring rubric, or taxonomy, is to make certain that there is consistency between the different observations. Another purpose of using a rubric is to make sure that the key parts of a lesson plan would be accounted for.

The scoring rubric is one that I have used in my L2 pedagogy courses. Research (see Lindahl, Tomas, & Christison [under review]) shows that preservice teachers who are trained on rubrics are able to identify teacher indicators of effective instruction. In addition, Christison, Lindahl, Tomas, and Bi [under review] found that preservice teachers' responses on the rubrics were consistent with their instructors on most of the teacher indicators used.

The two participants were each observed once in a 1 week period—1 participant had self-identified as a noncareer oriented TA and 1 as a career oriented TA. I observed the courses and also obtained a video recording. Findings from these observations helped me form the guiding questions and protocols for the interviews. TAs in each of the observed classes were interviewed, and each interview was audio recorded. Interviews were conducted in a designated place on campus with only the researcher and the TA present. Interviews took between 30-50 minutes each. Each interview consisted of responses to a set of guided questions. Each interview was structured in the same way and followed guided questions—a prepared set of questions, as well as unique questions for each teacher based on the classroom observation. From each interview, major themes were identified. The structure of the interview was flexible enough to allow the researcher to follow up on responses with obvious questions. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify major themes that surfaced from the interviews. Thematic analysis

is a type of analysis where researchers focus on searching through the data for themes and patterns (Glesne, 2011). In other words, once it is determined what the main ideas and messages were from the transcript, I focused on themes by looking deeper at their meanings within the context, and at the relationship of themes to the research questions.

Researcher Orientation

For this study, I am starting from a constructivist paradigm. Constructivists assume that there is no absolute universal truth and reality. Truth, if it exists, is unknowable. Instead of finding absolute truths, constructivists argue that multiple realities exist and that these realities are constructed by individuals who experience the world from their own vantage points” (Hatch, 2002, p. 15). My study looks at the teaching beliefs and behaviors of ESL TAs, specifically, how career and noncareer oriented TAs differ in their teaching beliefs and behaviors. As discussed above, the whole concept of teacher beliefs is nuanced and hard to accurately define. This vagueness in definition is perfectly suited for a constructivist paradigm. The idea that there are multiple realities, and that each reality is defined by the experiences and views of individuals, fits nicely with this study.

Each participant in the study will have different views and opinions about teaching, as well as different goals for the future. With a constructivist paradigm, participant and researcher come together to construct what exactly their reality is. Under this paradigm, it is —through mutual engagement that researchers and respondents construct the subjective reality that is under investigation” (Hatch, 2002, p. 15). Thus, with a constructivist research paradigm, the researcher acknowledges that there is no

single reality, and that instead, each of the participants in this study experiences the world around them uniquely, which in turn is the basis of what they perceive as reality. With this idea in hand, the researcher and participants will work together through negotiation, recollection, and discussion, to arrive at each individual's reality on the subject of teacher beliefs and behaviors.

Case Study Approach

To answer the proposed research questions, I designed my data collection and analysis around a case study, or in this case, a participant observation study model. Participant observation case studies are qualitative studies that —place researchers in social settings but do not have the broad purpose of capturing the cultural knowledge that insiders use to make sense of those settings” (Hatch, 2002, p. 23). Much like ethnographies, participant observation case studies include interviewing, artifact collection, and especially direct observation. However, unlike ethnographies, participant observation case studies are much more narrow and focused. In this study, I am not interested in describing the lives and lived experiences of ESL TAs in general; instead, I am focused primarily on their teacher beliefs, how they behave in class in relationship to those beliefs, and what the relationship is between beliefs about language teaching and beliefs about practice for TAs involved in this study, especially as these beliefs relate to TA self-selection into career and noncareer oriented groups. With participant observation case studies, —researchers often enter the field with specific interests and/or specific questions that concentrate their studies in ways that ethnographers do not” (Hatch, 2002, p22).

Researcher as Instrument

Because I am studying applied linguistics and am a TA who teaches English as second language (ESL) classes, in the sense of being an ESL TA myself, I will be an insider. Many of the other ESL graduate TAs are part of my graduate cohort. By sharing offices with some of the other ESL graduate TAs, I have developed a good rapport and relationship with them. We have shared all types of teaching experiences with one another, as well as some of our teaching beliefs, methodologies, and pedagogies. Whenever we have had teaching problems, we have been able to talk through them.

As an insider, I believe that I am in a perfect position to get real and genuine information from my study population. Not only are some of the participants in my study taking the same classes as I am, we know the same professors and study in the same academic environment. I am someone that most of the graduate TAs should be able to feel comfortable with and open towards.

Although I do not share many of the cultural experiences and backgrounds as my study population, my role as a colleague allows me many shared academic and cultural experiences with them. I speak the same native language as most of the other graduate teaching assistants, and have gone through many of the same academic experiences as both an undergraduate and graduate student. I have taught the same classes that my study population has taught, and have had many of the same experiences with my own students. I may come from a very different background, but as a student and a teacher, there is much that I share with my study population.

As an insider and as a researcher doing case studies with a constructivist approach, I realize that there are many things that I need to keep in mind. As a colleague

doing classroom observations and interviews, there is a real possibility that my study population will not be entirely forthright. There will always be the urge to appear more ~~proper~~ and ~~modern~~ in the way they conduct their observed classes as well as in the way they describe their own teaching beliefs. As not just a colleague but also a friend, they may appeal towards the things we have learned in class for the ~~research supported~~ response to my questions. No one wants to look bad in front of a colleague. Also, as fellow researchers, academics, and teachers, there is the distinct possibility that the participants will try to figure out what exactly my research questions are or what I am actually looking for.

There is not much that I can do to change any of these factors; I am part of the research that I am studying. What I can do, however, is to try to create an environment that is more conducive to an honest, heart to heart sharing of ideas, beliefs, and experiences. I can try to create this environment by keeping the conversation light and nonjudgmental during the interviews and giving the impression that I am not so serious about what I am actually looking for. By setting my participants at ease, I should be able to gather information that is as accurate and honest as it can be.

As a researcher, I am an instrument of (possible) change. Realistically, as an M.A. thesis, my research may not be the source of change in the ESL graduate TA ecology; however, the possibility is still there. By looking at how teaching beliefs correlate with actual classroom teaching, as well as by looking at whether the desire to have teaching as a part of one's future career, I will be in a position to offer ideas to improve teaching for ESL graduate TAs. Because the participants in this study are graduate students and by definition temporary employees of the University, they would most likely not be involved

in any change that could result from the results of this thesis. In addition, change within an institution of higher education (IHE) is incredibly slow and deliberate.

I am quite able to adapt to a variety of different cultural settings. I am a deep insider within my study population, because of my own experience as a TA. I realize that I have to be aware of some of the potential issues that may arise from not only my background as a TA but also from my role as a researcher; however, by thinking about issues that may arise, as well as how I will address them, I should be able to overcome the challenges that may occur during my research study. I am cognizant that my research could very well impact the people I am studying; however, this is most likely not going to be the case. I am in a unique position to research the population on which I am focusing. There is a gap in the research on ESL graduate teaching assistants, especially as this research relates to the noncareer oriented TA. By conducting research in this area, I believe I may be able to make a contribution to the field.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter I will present both the quantitative and qualitative results of this study. In the first section, I provide a brief overview of my reasons for the choice of statistics and discuss the quantitative results by presenting descriptive statistics. The results of the statistical analyses follow. The descriptive statistics show the frequency of each response on the survey for all participants, as well as the frequency of responses for each of the self-identified groups—the career and noncareer oriented TA. Next, Pearson r correlation coefficients are presented for all of the matched questions on the survey. The correlation coefficients demonstrate how beliefs and practices are correlated within each group as a whole and within the five categories to which the belief and practice questions belong. Teacher beliefs and practices for the noncareer oriented and career oriented TAs are also compared. After this, the Pearson r correlation coefficients are displayed for each of the two groups of TAs. Finally, a t -test will be presented in order to determine if the responses given by the two different groups of TAs are statistically different from each other.

In the second section of this chapter, qualitative data are presented. First, summaries of the classroom observations as they relate to the taxonomy used for the observation are presented. Next, consistencies and inconsistencies between the beliefs

and practices of the two observed ESL TAs are discussed, as well as observations and themes that surfaced during the follow up interviews. Finally, themes that emerged from the classroom observations and from the interview data with the two ESL TAs are presented.

Results of the Quantitative Data

A survey was used to collect information about the relationship between perceived teaching beliefs and practices. In the survey, participants were asked to indicate to what degree they agreed or disagreed with matched pairs of belief and practice statements. To get at the varying degrees of agreement or disagreement, a 4-point Likert scale was used. The study looked at the correlation between the matched question pairs. For example, if a participant agreed strongly with a statement about teaching beliefs, would they also agree with a matching statement about teaching practices? The correlation coefficients obtained through Pearson r demonstrates how beliefs and practices are correlated for each group as a whole, and how they compare within the five categories to which belief and practice questions belonged.

Of all participants in the study, certain individuals were excluded from this study. This included individuals who have had more than 4 years of language teaching experience. The reason for this exclusion was because these individuals ($n=2$) represented outliers in this study. The aim of this study is to look at the majority of the language TA population. This population's teaching experience typically ranged from no teaching to 2 years of experience, thus individuals who had 4 or more years of experience were not representative of the majority of the population.

Because we are comparing two variables (teaching belief vs. teaching practice), Pearson r was used to measure the correlation between two interval variables. However, Pearson r has some basic assumptions that need to be met in order to be used correctly. First, variables used for Pearson r must be continuous. Second, Pearson r assumes that data are normally distributed, or parametric (Pallant, 2011). Thus, the first step that must be taken before using Pearson r is to determine whether the data have a normal distribution.

To measure for normal distribution, a composite (average) score is calculated for each participant. This score condenses all belief answers into one average score for teaching beliefs and for teaching practices, for each of the five categories of question pairs. Each category consists of three pairs of matched questions. The average for all belief questions is calculated, as well as the average for all teaching practice questions, across all five of the question categories. From these averages, the Shapiro-Wilk test to calculate normality was used. Shapiro-Wilk is used to test for normal distribution because it is the most powerful test for small sample sizes (under 50; Ricci, 2005). Table 4.1 shows the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test, confirming that data are normally distributed.

Thirty survey responses were collected. Empty surveys and surveys with missing values were excluded from the data pool. Twenty-seven survey responses were used for analysis. Of these, 17 were from career oriented TAs, while 10 were from noncareer oriented TAs.

Descriptive Statistics

In this section the descriptive statistics from this study will be discussed. The distribution of survey responses for the entire study population in each of the categories will also be presented and discussed.

Grammar instruction. Table 4.2 shows the frequency distribution of responses on the questionnaire for all respondents, specifically on belief/statement pairs on the subject of grammar instruction. Overall, belief and practice statements addressing grammar instruction were consistent. In addition, respondents generally agreed with all of the belief/statement pairs, with very few respondents who “strongly disagree” compared with 17/27, 12/27, and 13/27 who “strongly agree.”

Belief and practice Statements 5 and 21 asked participants if they believed that “Explicit grammar instruction is necessary in helping students achieve accuracy in a second language,” and if they “give explicit grammar instruction...” in the classes they teach. While the frequency and distribution of responses for both belief and practice statements are consistent, there was a split in agreement among groups; for both belief and practice statement, at least 40.7% of respondents disagreed with the statements.

For belief and practice Statements 31 and 11, there are some inconsistencies. Item 31 on the questionnaire asked if respondents believed that, “Analyzing grammar patterns and doing grammar exercises are an effective way to help students improve their accuracy in writing.” For this belief statement, the vast majority of respondents indicated that they agreed. However, with the corresponding practice statement, which asked respondents “In order to help students learn how to apply grammar rules in writing, I ask them to analyze grammar patterns and do grammar exercises,” the number of participants

that agreed dropped to 51.8%. In other words, while most respondents believed that analyzing grammar patterns and doing grammar exercises was an effective way to help students improve their accuracy in writing, almost half of respondents indicated that they do not do this in their classes, showing an inconsistency in beliefs and practice and supporting consistency in responses identified in Statements 5 and 21.

Corrective feedback. Table 4.3 lists the frequency and distribution of responses by all participants in the study on questionnaire items related to corrective feedback.

As Table 4.3 shows, responses to belief and practice statements in the area of corrective feedback were very consistent; the overall frequency of responses on belief statements were quite similar to those on practice statements for all pairs.

Participants believe that implicit error correction is better than explicit error correction and that teachers should only correct students if errors hinder communication or if content is wrong. In other words, participants indicated that students should be guided to self-correct, and that errors should only be corrected if there are content or communication problems, which is consistent with their disagreement with the statement that errors should be corrected immediately. Thus, while participants indicated that they disagreed with belief/practice Statements 22 and 15, the belief expressed is still consistent with the beliefs expressed in Statements 7, 28, 33, and 19.

Role of teacher. Table 4.4 shows the frequency and distribution of responses on the questionnaire by all participants for belief/practice statements on the role of a teacher. Respondents were consistent with their responses on belief and practice statements in terms of general agreement and disagreement, although the amount of agreement and disagreement varied. For example, Questionnaire Item 24 asked participants if they

believed that “Teachers should actively interact with students when they are doing group activities,” while Item 37 asked participants if they “...frequently interact with students when they are doing group activities.” Participants were in agreement with 59% on beliefs but 86% on practice.

Classroom interaction. Table 4.5 lists the frequency and distribution of responses by all participants on belief/statement pairs in the category of classroom interaction. Belief/practice statement responses were consistent with each other, and, in general, participants agreed with each statement. The disagreement expressed in Items 14 and 32 is actually consistent with the other belief/practice statements. The views expressed indicate that participants believed that student interaction and group work are beneficial for language students.

Planning and conducting lessons. Table 4.6 lists the frequency and distribution of responses by all participants on belief/practice statements in the category of planning and conducting lessons. The data in Table 4.6 show that overall, respondents were generally consistent in how they responded to belief/practice statement pairs and that they agreed with each statement pair.

Tables 4.7 to 4.11 present the distribution of survey responses by career and noncareer oriented TAs. Overall there is no visibly obvious difference between the two groups. In general, both groups agree and disagree with the same statements. Aside from one exception, the only real visible difference that can be seen through this descriptive data is that the career oriented TAs had a propensity towards stronger statements; career oriented TAs chose “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree” more often than the noncareer group. However, while the career-oriented group had stronger responses in

general, both groups responded in a very similar fashion in terms of agreeing or disagreeing with belief/practice statements.

As mentioned above, there was one particular statement in which there seemed to be a descriptive difference between the two groups: Questionnaire item 4. Questionnaire item 4 asked participants: “I depart from my lesson plan when a creative idea occurs to me during the class.” For this specific practice statement, the noncareer group overwhelmingly agreed that they did indeed depart from a lesson if they have a creative idea (90% agree, 10% disagree). However, for this practice statement, the career group was split in their responses: 58.8% agreed with this statement while 41.1% disagreed. Aside from this specific statement, however, responses by both the career and noncareer groups were descriptively quite similar.

Inferential Statistics

Descriptively, there did not seem to be an obvious difference between how the career and noncareer groups responded to the online questionnaire. However, to see if this is true, a statistical analysis needs to be done. To do this, a *t*-test is used. A *t*-test compares the means between two groups in order to measure if they are statistically different from each other. Table 4.12 lists the results of the *t*-test for each belief and practice statement on the survey. The results of the *t*-test show that there was no real difference between the means of both groups. However, there was a significant difference between how both groups responded to questionnaire Item 4 (“I depart from my lesson plan when a creative idea occurs to me during the class”). What this means is that both groups responded to this question in a significantly different way. This also confirms the

results presented in the descriptive statistics.

The correlation coefficients between the self-reported beliefs and practices of the total population are presented in Table 4.13. Table 4.13 shows that there is positive correlation between the self-reported beliefs and self-reported practices of all participants in the study in three of the five areas investigated (grammar instruction, $r=.560$; classroom interaction, $r=.529$; planning and conducting lessons, $r=.804$, $p<.01$). For the statement pairs in these three areas, the response given on a belief statement was statistically similar to the response given on the matching practice statement; in other words, when responses on belief statements increased, so did responses on practice statements.

Tables 4.14 and 4.15 present the correlation coefficients of beliefs and practices of each of the two groups. Table 4.14 shows the correlation between beliefs and practices of the career oriented TA group. Career oriented TAs showed significance in three of the five areas (grammar instruction, classroom interaction, planning and conducting lessons) the same three areas that were significant for the entire study population.

Table 4.15 shows the correlation coefficients of the noncareer oriented TA group. Correlation was present in two areas: role of the teacher, planning and conducting lessons. Thus, while the noncareer group had correlation between belief and practice statements in fewer areas than the career group, what is interesting to note is that one of the areas of correlation was unique to the noncareer group. Correlation was found in the area of role of the teacher in the noncareer group, but not in the career group.

Table 4.16 shows the correlation between matching belief and practice statements. The data in this table show why there was significance in only three of the five areas as

shown in Table 4.13. In two of the areas of the questionnaire, there were two specific belief/practice statement pairs that did not have significant correlation—corrective feedback and role of the teacher.

Statements 7 and 28 in corrective feedback consisted of the belief statement, ~~It~~ is better for teachers to help students self-correct by drawing attention to their errors through questioning strategies or clarification techniques, etc. rather than to overtly correct their errors,” and the practice statement, ~~I~~ often guide students to self-correct.” No significance for this question pair means that responses on belief statements did not show correlation to responses on practice statements, indicating that there was no relationship between how people responded on this practice and belief statement.

Statement pair 29 and 12 on the role of the teacher consisted of the belief statement, ~~When~~ students are doing group activities, it is the teacher’s responsibility to make sure every student is actively participating in the tasks, the activities are progressing as planned, and students finish within the time limit,” and the practice statement, ~~When~~ students are doing group activities, I monitor the activities and make certain students are on task, activities are progressing smoothly, and students finish within the time limit.” Again, lack of statistical correlation indicates that how participants responded to one statement had no effect on how they responded to the other.

Results of Qualitative Data

This section presents the results of the qualitative data from this study. First, summaries of the classroom observations are presented. Next, consistencies and inconsistencies between teacher beliefs and teacher beliefs about classroom practices are

identified. Finally, themes that emerged from the observation and follow up interviews are discussed.

Classroom Observations

For each observation, a classroom observation rubric was used (see Appendix B).

Teacher 1. Table 4.17 summarizes Teacher 1's instructional activities according to the rubric. Teacher 1 is a career oriented ESL TA. The class was 50 minutes long and met 3 times a week. There were 40 students in this class. The majority of students in this class were ESL students; however, this class also consisted of 5 native English speakers. The topic of discussion was religious intolerance in American history.

Into – Teacher 1. The goal of the “Into” stage of a lesson is “...for students to gain an entrée into the topic, recognize the depth of their own prior knowledge, and be better prepared for the new content materials they are about to encounter” (Brinton & Holten, 1997, p. 11). The “Into” stage of a lesson involves preparing students for what is to come during the class, activating background knowledge, building interest, getting students to think about the topics that will be covered in class.

The lesson with Teacher 1 began by going over various administrative tasks, such as reminders of upcoming assignments. The instructor reviewed the various options the students had for their next writing assignment. When he was finished, he asked the class if they had any questions on the assignment. The class did not answer, but the instructor moved on. The administrative tasks took about 6 of the 50 minutes to conduct. None of the activities specifically addressed the Into stage of lesson planning as they were not directed to learning activity.

Through – Teacher 1. In the “Through” stage of a lesson plan, students are given opportunities to practice new skills, demonstrate comprehension, and to negotiate the meaning of new information. This oftentimes involves relating the new information to what was discussed in the “Into” stage (Brinton & Holten. 1997).

Next, Teacher 1 used PowerPoint and a projector to display a slide listing all the individual groups for the class. Approximately 40 students in the class were divided into 12 groups, with three to four members per group. During this time, Teacher 1 helped students to find their groups and to sit down together. Each group was given one of three assigned readings before class. This process took about 5 minutes.

After students were in groups of three to four, Teacher 1 displayed a slide with three discussion questions for students to answer and discuss in their groups. Each group was asked to answer the discussion questions that were given earlier within the context of the specific article to which each group was assigned. Thus, with three readings, a total of four groups were assigned to each individual reading.

During group work, some ESL students chatted with one another in their native languages, while others discussed the questions in English. Many students seemed to be off topic. As students worked in groups, Teacher 1 walked around the classroom visiting with individual groups. Teacher 1 would tell students to put away distracting electronic devices, such as iPads and cell phones, and would ask each group about their progress. Some groups had difficulty understanding the discussion questions and asked for clarification from the instructor. Teacher 1 asked some groups who were off task to write their answers to the discussion questions on paper. If the group answered the questions, the instructor verbally provided the group with another discussion question to work on.

While circulating around the room, Teacher 1 briefly visited with the majority of the groups in the classroom. The group discussion in small groups took about 10 minutes.

After the small group discussion, the Teacher 1 had the entire class share and review their answers to the discussion questions. Teacher 1 called on individual groups to give their answers to the discussion questions. Teacher 1 asked one question to each group. Each reading had three discussion questions, and the teacher would ask each of the four groups assigned to that reading one of the discussion questions. Because there were three questions and four groups, by the time it came to the fourth group, Teacher 1 would ask questions such as “Do you have anything else to add?” In which case the groups responded with a “no.” This class discussion took about 15 minutes.

Next the teacher reviewed all of the discussion question answers, in a brief lecture that took approximately 4 minutes.

Once the discussion questions for all three of the readings were reviewed, the instructor showed a new slide with another set of discussion questions. As with the previous discussion questions, Teacher 1 circulated around the room visiting groups individually. The teacher asked groups “Are you guys done?” when they began to drift off topic. During this time, many students asked various questions related to their upcoming writing assignment. The second discussion took about 10 minutes.

The second discussion was followed by individual groups answering discussion questions in front of the class. When the teacher could not understand students, he would ask them to clarify and to repeat. A few of the students read their answers directly from the text. The first groups answered all the questions while the last groups told the teacher they had nothing to add.

As time was running out for the class, the teacher called on some groups to give more examples of the theme of religious intolerance in the world today. The students the teacher called on were the native English-speaking students. The teacher briefly mentioned some of the things that the students would be learning about next class and dismissed the class.

Beyond – Teacher 1. In the “Beyond” stage of a lesson, the goal is for students to “... demonstrate both conceptual and linguistic mastery...” of the content material by using their knowledge of the material in creative ways (Brinton & Holten, 1997, p. 11). The “Beyond” stage helps students to see that the material presented in class can apply to things outside of the classroom and possibly in their own lives. There were no activities used during this observed lesson that fit into this stage of a lesson plan.

Teacher 2

Table 4.18 summarizes the instructional activities, using the “Into, Through, Beyond” classroom observation rubric, for the day that Teacher 2 was observed. Teacher 2 is a first year linguistics MA student who does not plan on teaching a second language as part of his career. The class observed was an ESL 1040 Advanced Grammar and Editing Skills class. The class was 50 minutes long and consisted of about 25 ESL students. The main focus of the class is on grammar, along with a few short composition writing assignments throughout the semester.

Into – Teacher 2. The “Into” stage of a lesson involves activating background knowledge and preparing students for new content. There was no “Into” stage during the observed lesson. Teacher 2 began the lesson with administrative tasks—writing

upcoming assignments and due dates on the white board, handing back compositions that were previously due, commenting briefly to the class about the composition he was handing back, writing an example sentence on the white board from a previous quiz, and soliciting answers from the class. Teacher 2 asked questions and then answered the questions himself. The teacher asked the class again if they had any questions. When there was no response he continued with his lesson. This process took about 5 minutes.

Through – Teacher 2. For the Through stage of the lesson, Teacher 2 used a lecture and group/individual work in order to present students with new information, and to allow them to analyze and practice the new material. In the previous class, Teacher 2 had covered a chapter from the textbook about adverb clauses. Because he said that he had felt rushed, he was going to go through the chapter one more time. Teacher 2 went through each section of the chapter, writing on the white board to help illustrate his points. Throughout the lecture, Teacher 2 tried to solicit answers from the class; however, only one student volunteered an answer during this time. After presenting all sections of the chapter on adverb clauses from the textbook, Teacher 2 asked students to work in groups, or individually on the chapter quiz from the textbook. The lecture itself took about 15 minutes.

Some students formed small groups of two to three to work on the quiz while the majority of the students worked alone. Students were asked to complete the chapter quiz and write down the reasons for their answers. Once they were done, they were told to hand in their work along with the names of everyone in their group.

During the quiz activity, some students were off task. One or two students worked on the assignment while the others in the group chatted with friends. For those students

working individually, a few played on their electronic devices or chatted with other people.

Teacher 2 circulated around the classroom and many students asked him questions about the composition that was handed back to them at the beginning of class. After a few students asked questions about their compositions, Teacher 2 announced to the class that he would not be answering any more questions about the composition during class. After this, a few students paid more attention to their compositions than to the class assignment.

As students continued to work towards finishing their chapter quiz, Teacher 2 walked around the room and visited with many of the students. Occasionally Teacher 2 would ask the students a question, or the students would ask him specific problems. However, for the most part, students stopped talking and lowered their heads as Teacher 2 stood quietly over them. During this time, there was one group of students that was very clearly off task. Teacher 2 visited with this group two or three times during the course of the class. Each time, Teacher 2 would remind the students to work on the assignment, and that he was collecting this assignment after class. However, after each visit, this group of students would promptly go back to whatever it was they were doing.

When groups did have questions for Teacher 2, he would try to walk the students through the question and push them towards an answer. However, when students could not answer, he would promptly give them the answer, and then try to explain why it was the answer. This part of the lesson took about 20 minutes. Once class time was over, Teacher 2 collected papers from students and dismissed the class.

Beyond – Teacher 2. There were no activities that fit in the “Beyond” stage of a lesson plan during this observation.

Observation Rubric Results

Tables 4.19 and 4.20 show the ratings that the rater assigned each lesson during the classroom observation for each instructor. There were a total of four ratings: not present, present and ineffective, present and somewhat effective, present and effective. While both teachers had items that were not present in their lesson (five for Teacher 1 and seven for Teacher 2), Teacher 1 had more items that were present and somewhat effective (eight for Teacher 1 and one for Teacher 2), and present and effective (one for Teacher 1 and none for Teacher 2). Teacher 1 had five indicators that were present and ineffective while Teacher 2 had 10 indicators that were present and ineffective.

Interview Data

Data were collected using interview questions (see Appendix C). These questions served as a general framework for gathering information. The researcher also used unplanned follow up questions with the individual teachers that were based on their responses to the interview questions.

Teacher 1 – Teacher and student roles. Teacher 1 stated that the role of the teacher involved being prepared and knowing the material being taught. Teacher 1 believes that assignments need to allow for both implicit and explicit learning, and that assignments should push students to think about language and how to use it.

For the role of a language student, Teacher 1 believes that students need to come

to class regularly and pay attention. Students also need to find their own motivation for learning a language because the more motivation they have, the better their results will be. Another aspect of student behavior that Teacher 1 mentioned is that aside from doing assignments and coming to class, students need to learn to apply what they learn themselves. These beliefs coincide to a large degree with Teacher 1's own experiences as an undergraduate and graduate student.

In the classroom, Teacher 1 stated that he find that his students have widely different levels of English skills. Because his class is a content-based class in which content drives the curriculum, his students have not necessarily completed the same ESL classes. He believes this is the reason they have varying levels of English language skills and aptitudes. Teacher 1 states that while some students understand his spoken English in class, others have more difficulty with comprehension. Because this is a content-based class, Teacher 1 believes that his own teacher talk should be "authentic" and that he should not modify his speech too greatly. He states that in order for his students to do well in mainstream classes, they need to get used to normal speech. By providing authentic input (i.e., not using L2 teacher talk), students will ideally have practice in understanding how teachers normally speak in mainstream classes.

When asked about assessing whether students understand the material being taught, Teacher 1 stated that he used in class assessments to gauge comprehension. These assessments typically take the form of questions from the teacher to individual students, as well as performance through group work. Because he is also taking graduate coursework, Teacher 1 feels that often times he does not have the time outside of the class to give very helpful written feedback on assignments and performances.

Teacher 1 – Lesson delivery. A typical class for Teacher 1 begins by assigning students reading and discussion questions before class. Once class begins, Teacher 1 reviews the readings and discussion questions with the class. At this point, students are typically placed into groups of three to five to discuss their own answers to discussion questions and readings. To make sure students are on task, Teacher 1 calls on individual students to give their answers, as well as report on what they discussed in their groups. Following the first group discussion, there is typically a lecture about the reading, along with other types of activities, such as vocabulary and matching. After this, Teacher 1 has students continue with group work by giving them questions related to the readings for groups to discuss. After students have finished discussing and answering their questions, Teacher 1 has each group share their answers with the class.

To prepare for each lesson, Teacher 1 uses PowerPoint presentations from previous instructors, and modifies them to suit his needs. Teacher 1 will then identify his objectives, or what he wants his students to get out of the material. After reviewing the readings himself, Teacher 1 said that he decides on different discussion questions and activities to give his students.

When asked about the effectiveness of group work versus lecturing, Teacher 1 stated that he believed that group work tends to be much more effective. This is one reason why he plans for group work of some type for every class period. While there are times he feels that he has to lecture, Teacher 1 finds group work more effective because students have more opportunities to give ideas and opinions.

To keep students on task during group work, Teacher 1 stated that he likes to circulate around the classroom to check in on individual groups. In this way, Teacher 1 is

able to try to keep groups on task by asking students questions, and to help other groups by answering questions that they have. In deciding which groups to visit, Teacher 1 stated that he typically does not visit groups where his best students are, because they can think through questions themselves and help the group they are in with the discussion. Instead Teacher 1 tries to focus his visits with groups of students that he knows are having a more difficult time because of English level, or motivation.

When class discussions depart from the lesson of the day, Teacher 1 believes that if it is a good discussion, it is worth putting off the other things that he had planned for the class. If a discussion is good and warrants departure from the lesson plan, it will give students even more opportunities to use English and to express their views. This typically is not a problem because Teacher 1 makes weekly objectives. If a class departs from the lesson one day, he states that he will make up for it by the end of the week.

Teacher 1 – Error correction . When students make errors in speech or writing, Teacher 1 chooses to ignore them as long as it is not stopping comprehension. Because this is a content class, his goals do not focus specifically on grammar or writing. Thus, during class if a student says something wrong, or has other spoken errors, Teacher 1 will recast and restate the student's words. Teacher 1 believes that ideally, when a teacher solicits a recast, or repeats something himself, the student will notice his/her error and be more conscious of it next time. When actual ideas or content are wrong, Teacher 1 will call on other students until he gets the correct answer.

Teacher 1 – Effective teaching. When asked how he could become a more effective ESL teacher, Teacher 1 said that he wished he had more time to focus on his teaching. Taking coursework while also teaching ESL classes is very time consuming.

While he would like to focus on his students more, he also has to make sure that his own coursework is taken care of. Aside from spending more time planning, Teacher 1 feels that if he could give better explicit feedback to his students, both in class and on assignments, he would become much more effective. Teacher 1 realizes that right now he does not give a lot of explicit feedback; instead, the majority of his feedback is implicit. However, Teacher 1 believes that explicit and detailed feedback will serve students better in terms of growing their language and critical thinking skills. Finally, Teacher 1 also would like to be able to reach his struggling students and help them more. With time constraints, he does not have enough time or energy to reach out to all of his struggling students. There is a lot that Teacher 1 believes he can improve on. He states that hopefully after his graduate coursework, he will continue to become an even more effective instructor.

Teacher 1 – Thematic analysis. There were two distinct themes that surfaced in the interview with Teacher 1. The first theme was related to the role of a teacher in an ESL classroom: A teacher should serve as not only a resource, but should also provide students with authentic like input, and guide students to explore language and ideas amongst themselves. The second theme that emerged from the interview with Teacher 1 was the importance of group work.

Teacher 2 - Teacher and student roles. Teacher 2 believes that the role of a teacher is to serve as an extension of the class textbook; a teacher should take concepts from the text and make it easier to understand through the use of examples and reorganization. Through this, a teacher should serve as a resource and help students to find answers. To accomplish this, a teacher should also use visual aids and to be available

to students in and outside of class. A teacher knows much more about a given subject than the students, and, thus, the role of a teacher is to serve as a resource for students and to be available to answer any of their questions. Because of this belief, Teacher 2 feels that classroom environments are not ideal for learning; instead, learning should take place one on one between the teacher and student. The reasons for this are that at the classroom level, it is difficult to address the problems that every single student has and that there is no single way to teach that will reach everyone.

When asked about teaching in the future, Teacher 2 said that there was no situation that he could foresee in which he would want to teach a language class anytime in the future. He would however, like to teach math. The reason for this is that the way math is taught currently in schools is deficient. He stated that math is not something that should be learned from rote memorization. Instead, math should be learned from understanding, and that math should be ~~geometrical~~.” When asked why Teacher 2 preferred to teach math instead of language, Teacher 2 responded by saying ~~Math~~ underlies the sciences.”

Teacher 2 believes that the main responsibility of a student is self-assessment. The reason for this is because the student has all the information; the student knows what he/she does or does not understand. Thus it is the student’s responsibility to seek out answers and to be vigilant about what they do not understand. To achieve this, students need to form questions and be in a constant state of inquiry. Students also need to take responsibility for their own learning; if they do not care about a course, it is fine if they do not attend, the responsibility is their own.

These expectations of students, however, do not match with Teacher 2’s

experiences as a student. During his undergraduate career, Teacher 2 would never ask questions during class, and would often miss classes completely. Teacher 2 also had a few bad experiences with teachers, although he did not care to elaborate. When asked why his expectations of his students did not match his own experiences and practices as a student, Teacher 2 said that his own beliefs on the responsibilities of a student most likely came from his parents, who themselves were teachers. His parents would tutor him often when he was younger. Another reason for his beliefs came from his experiences with a high school debate team. He commented that having knowledge of something does not really translate into understanding, and that it is through self-assessment and forming questions that knowledge can become understanding.

Teacher 2 – Lesson delivery. When asked how well students understand his speech during class, Teacher 2 initially responded by saying “absolutely none.” However, he continued by saying that maybe 50% of the class understands him when he lectures and speaks in class. Also, when he received midterm written feedback from his students, many students asked for him to lower his rate of speech. Since then, Teacher 2 has tried to speak slower and more deliberate, and to incorporate more writing on the whiteboard because it gives time for students to “catch up.” When asked about the effectiveness of his new teacher talk, Teacher 2 believes that it has made some differences. Students that sit in the front row seem to pay more attention and are better able to take notes about what he says. However, with other students, he is not sure at all if this slower more deliberate way of speaking has made any difference.

The class Teacher 2 teaches focuses primarily on grammar structures, along with a few short compositions and drafts during the semester. Teacher 2 believes that the

purpose of this class is to improve English language skills; however, in reality this class is —worthless.” Rote memorization of grammar is not very useful. Also, from looking at student writing, Teacher 2 felt that the majority of errors were lexical selection and not necessarily grammar at all.

To prepare for his class, Teacher 2 goes through the textbook chapter and writes out lecture notes. However, at times, instead of following the textbook, he decides on what he agrees and disagrees with from the textbook. For instance, during the day of the interview, Teacher 2 stated that he had not covered anything at all from the textbook. The textbook, he believes, is wrong about many things and is full of prescriptivism. Thus, instead of following the chapters section by section, he will often use his own experiences as a linguist to restate or clarify the text.

Earlier in the semester, Teacher 2 would give a lecture about topics from the grammar textbook and dismiss class after he was done. Now, however, instead of just lecturing, Teacher 2 has been trying to incorporate group work. For instance, when asked about what his grammar class is typically like, Teacher 2 says that he begins class with some administrative tasks, such as announcing the results of quizzes and reviewing upcoming due dates. Teacher 2 does not believe in using objectives. The main reason, he explained, was that he is not confident that his students could actually meet any objectives that he writes. Next, he moves into a lecture about the topic of the day, while trying to use examples on the white board to reinforce what he is saying. Then he has students work in groups or individually on an exercise from the textbook. Because many students already have the answers in their second hand textbooks, Teacher 2 has students justify their answers in writing, which he collects at the end of each class. While Teacher

2 collects these answers from individuals and groups, he does not actually grade them; rather he grades on completion and not accuracy. After having students work on something in class, he dismisses them. While students are working on their exercises, Teacher 2 circulates around the room to see if anyone has specific questions.

Teacher 2 sees group work in class as an opportunity for students to ask questions. Also, by having students justify their answers, it allows students to ask him even more questions. It is not important to Teacher 2 if students work in groups or individually, since he himself is personally not a fan of group work. In his own experiences, he described himself as the student who would stay silent and take notes. One of the reasons he did this was because he does not like to interact with people, and because he did not really pay attention to activities himself; interacting with students is not one of his strengths. While Teacher 2 did not like group work when he was an undergraduate, he believes that group work is good as a teacher, because it allows students to ask questions individually. When asked about the effectiveness of student learning during group and individual work during class, Teacher 2 says that he is not sure how effective it is. Group/individual work is not about learning content from the group, since 10-15 minutes of interaction in class will not make any difference. It is more important that students have the opportunity to ask questions to the teacher. Ideally, group work would be more productive, however, at this point of his graduate career, it is ~~too~~ hard now.” When asked why he allowed some students to work alone while others worked in groups, Teacher 2 replied that he does not feel like it makes much of a difference. Typically the better students are the ones that work alone.

While the effectiveness of group/individual work in this grammar class might be

questionable, Teacher 2 believes that it is still more effective than his lectures. The main reason was that by having only a lecture, students were missing out on opportunities for them to check their own comprehension, and that aside from summative assessments like quizzes, there was no way to assess how the class was doing.

During group work, Teacher 2 often circulates through the classroom, making himself available to students with questions. When students do not ask questions, Teacher 2 likes to linger around groups that have asked him questions in the past. When students are off task however, Teacher 2 does not really care. College teachers are not responsible for hand holding. Students —. are free to flounder if they show no initiative.” Also, students must learn from consequences. Teacher 2 believes that the main role of a teacher during group work is to be available to students with questions, not to force them to do things.

The best way to learn grammar, according to Teacher 2, is through experience. Grammar should be learned through language acquisition, meaning that the more exposure a student has to the target language, the more they will internalize grammatical structures. Rote memorization, while not good, is also necessary. Ideally students will be able to take what they know and make arguments from data, or in this case, language. By looking at data, students should be able to see features, and use examples to derive conclusions. Thus, instead of lecturing, students should be given sentences that are correct and incorrect. Students then need to decide for themselves and explain why a sentence is correct or incorrect. According to Teacher 2, this, paired with a lot of reading and writing, is how students can learn grammar and improve their writing.

Teacher 2 – Error correction. When asked about how he deals with error correction, Teacher 2 said that the effectiveness of error correction depends on the student. “In theory it should be very effective.” When a student makes an error, Teacher 2 tries to lead students through a thought process, typically by having students try to justify the various possible answers. If a student is having difficulty, Teacher 2 will provide the student with various options, and then ultimately, if the student is still having trouble, give them the answer.

Teacher 2 – Effective teaching. Teacher 2 believes that there are definitely things he could do to improve himself as a teacher. First, Teacher 2 believes that his own personal lack of creativity and interest in group activities is his biggest weakness. Because he comes from a deficit way of thinking concerning group activities, he is not sure how to make activities effective. Also, a more intimate knowledge of the material he is teaching would make him much more effective in his opinion.

Teacher 2 – Thematic analysis. There are two main themes that emerged from the interview with Teacher 2. First, the primary role of a language teacher is to simplify material in the textbook, and to be available to students. The second theme that emerged through the interview with Teacher 2 was the idea that students are responsible for their own learning.

Consistency Between Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices and Classroom Observations

In this section, the two subjects’ questionnaire responses and their actual teaching behaviors are examined to see if teachers’ beliefs were consistent with their behaviors.

This analysis consists of three parts. First the responses to the online questionnaire were compared to see if answers to belief statements corresponded with practice statements. Second, this information was compared with the actual teacher behaviors obtained from the videotape during the classroom observation. Third, a better understanding of teaching beliefs and practices were revealed through a follow up interview where questions were targeted so as to allow both participants to talk more in depth about their own perceived beliefs and classroom practices. Most of the belief/practice statement responses were consistent with each other. However, there were instances of inconsistency. The results that follow list specific examples of these inconsistencies.

Teacher 1 – Consistency. While Teacher 1 had many consistent responses to belief and practice statement pairs on the online survey, there were a few inconsistencies. For instance, with matched pair questions concerning grammar, Teacher 1 agreed with Question 5 (–Explicit grammar instruction is necessary in helping students achieve accuracy in a second language”), but disagreed with Question 21 (–I give explicit grammar instruction in the classes I teach”). Teacher 1 agreed with Question 31 (–Analyzing grammar patterns and doing grammar exercises are an effective way to help students improve their accuracy in writing”), but he disagreed with Question 11 (–In order to help students learn how to apply grammar rules in writing, I ask them to analyze grammar patterns and do grammar exercises”).

With matched question pairs concerning feedback, Teacher 1 disagreed with Question 33 (–Teachers should only correct students when their errors interfere with communication or when the content is inaccurate”) but agreed with Question 19 (–I only correct students when their errors hinder communication or when the content is

inaccurate”).

There was one pair of questions concerning planning and conducting lessons in which Teacher 1 was inconsistent. Teacher 1 disagreed with Question 25 (~~Teachers~~ should depart from their lesson plans when they come up with activities that are more creative than the ones originally prepared”) but agreed with Question 4 (~~I~~depart from my lesson plan when a creative idea occurs to me during the class”).

Teacher 2 – Consistency. Teacher 2 disagreed with Question 5 (~~Explicit~~ grammar instruction is necessary in helping students achieve accuracy in a second language”) but strongly agreed with Question 21 (~~I~~give explicit grammar instruction in the classes I teach”). Teacher 2 disagreed with Question 31 (~~Analyzing~~ grammar patterns and doing grammar exercises are an effective way to help students improve their accuracy in writing”) but agreed with Question 11 (~~In~~ order to help students learn how to apply grammar rules in writing, I ask them to analyze grammar patterns and do grammar exercises”).

With question pairs concerning feedback, Teacher 2 had the same inconsistency as Teacher 1. Teacher 2 disagreed with Question 33 (~~Teachers~~ should only correct students when their errors interfere with communication or when the content is inaccurate”) but agreed with Question 19 (~~I~~only correct students when their errors hinder communication or when the content is inaccurate”).

Inconsistencies were also present with question pairs targeted at the role of the teacher. Teacher 2 disagreed with Question 29 (~~When~~ students are doing group activities, it is the teacher’s responsibility to make sure every student is actively participating in the tasks, the activities are progressing as planned, and students finish

within the time limit”) but agreed with Question 12 (~~When~~ students are doing group activities, I monitor the activities and make certain students are on task, activities are progressing smoothly, and students finish within the time limit”).

With question pairs about classroom interaction, Teacher 2 agreed with Question 27 (~~In~~ addition to working individually, students should have opportunities to work in both pairs and small groups”) but disagreed with Question 6 (~~I~~vary group structure in my class so that students are involved in individual work, pair work, and small-group work”).

Questions about planning and conducting lessons also had one inconsistency. Teacher 2 agreed with Question 9 (~~Teachers~~ should prepare a detailed lesson plan for every class they teach”) but disagreed with Question 8 (~~I~~have a lesson plan for every class I teach”).

Self-reported Beliefs from the Interviews and Classroom Observations

While each teacher observed had stated some of their teacher beliefs through the interview and online questionnaire, in practice there were inconsistencies between teacher beliefs and actual observed practices. In this section, stated teaching beliefs will be compared with practices observed during the classroom observation.

Teacher 1 – Interview/Observation. There were a few inconsistencies between the self-reported beliefs of Teacher 1 on the questionnaire and the actual classroom observation. For Teacher 1 there were three specific beliefs that were not consistent with classroom practice. First, on the survey Teacher 1 indicated that he agreed to the belief statement that ~~Explicit~~ grammar instruction is necessary in helping students achieve

accuracy in a second language.” However, during the observed class, Teacher 1 did not spend any time focusing on grammar instruction. Teacher 1 also agreed with the belief that “Practicing an L2 in situations simulating real life, such as interviews and role plays, is a better way for students to improve oral language proficiency than analyzing grammar and doing grammar exercises”; however, during the class observed there were no activities that tried to mimic real life situations. Another inconsistency was with the belief statement “Analyzing grammar patterns and doing grammar exercises are an effective way to help students improve their accuracy in writing.” While Teacher 1 agreed with this belief statement, it was absent from the class observed. Teacher 1 also agreed with the belief statement that “It is better for teachers to help students self-correct by drawing attention to their errors through questioning strategies or clarification techniques, etc. rather than to overtly correct their errors.” During the classroom observation, it did seem that Teacher 1 would try to guide students to self-correct and to arrive at the correct answers themselves, however, almost every time Teacher 1 did this, Teacher 1 would ultimately give the student the correct answer. Finally, Teacher 1 agreed with the belief that “After giving instructions, teachers should conduct comprehension checks to make sure language students understand.” During the classroom observation, however, Teacher 1 would conduct comprehension checks with yes/no questions, which did not really allow students to show whether they understood or not.

While there were five specific inconsistencies between beliefs and actual classroom observation, there were far more beliefs that were consistent. In fact, out of the 15 belief statements presented on the questionnaire, 10 belief statements were consistent with what was observed in the classroom observation for Teacher 1. Table 4.21

summarizes all consistencies and inconsistencies between beliefs as stated in the interviews and observed practices.

Teacher 2 – Interview/Observation. Teacher 2 also showed inconsistencies between self-reported teaching beliefs and what was observed during the classroom observation. Teacher 2 agreed with the belief statement that ~~It~~ is better for teachers to help students self-correct by drawing attention to their errors through questioning strategies or clarification techniques, etc. rather than to overtly correct their errors.” However, during the observed class, instead of leading students to self correct their errors, Teacher 2 would usually explicitly point out student errors and give the correct answer. Teacher 2 disagreed with the belief statement, ~~When~~ students are doing group activities, it is the teacher’s responsibility to make sure every student is actively participating in the tasks, the activities are progressing as planned, and students finish within the time limit.” While Teacher 2 disagreed with this statement, during group activities, Teacher 2 would circulate around the classroom to oversee the students and to check in on their progress.

Another inconsistency observed concerned the belief statement, ~~Providing~~ students with opportunities to interact with each other in pair and small-group work gives them an opportunity to negotiate the input they receive and make greater gains in the target language.” Teacher 2 strongly agreed with this belief statement but allowed many students to work individually during the observed class. Finally, Teacher 2 agreed with the belief statement, ~~Teachers~~ should depart from their lesson plans when they come up with activities that are more creative than the ones originally prepared.” This did not align with what was observed. During the classroom observation, as well as through the

follow up interview, it seemed that the structure of the lesson was very strict. Teacher 2 believed strongly in having lessons planned out, and did not seem to want to depart from them. During the classroom observation, Teacher 2 finished his planned lesson and dismissed his students 15 minutes early.

Much like Teacher 1, the majority of belief statements were consistent with practices observed during the classroom observation. Of the 15 belief statements, Teacher 2 was consistent with 11 belief statements, and inconsistent with 4. Table 4.22 lists the specific statements that were consistent and inconsistent with practice.

Table 4.1 Shapiro-Wilk Test for Normality.

	Belief Questions	Practice Questions
Sig	.052*	.051*

*Significance at .05 level

Table 4.2 Mean, SD, and Frequency Distribution of Belief and Practice Statements in the Category of Grammar Instruction.

Grammar Instruction						
Belief/Practice (Survey Question)	Mean	SD	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)
Belief 1 (5)	2.26	.71	4 14.8%	12 44.4%	11 40.7%	0 0%
Practice 1 (21)	2.37	.74	3 11.1%	12 44.4%	11 40.7%	1 3.7%
Belief 2 (16)	1.48	.75	17 63%	8 29.6%	1 3.7%	1 3.7%
Practice 2 (26)	1.7	.76	12 44.4%	12 44.4%	2 7.4%	1 3.7%
Belief 3 (31)	2.67	.73	13 48.1%	10 37%	4 14.8%	0 0%
Practice 3 (11)	2.44	.70	2 7.4%	12 44.4%	12 44.4%	1 3.7%

Table 4.3 Mean, SD, and Frequency Distribution of Belief and Practice Statements the in Category of Corrective Feedback.

Corrective Feedback						
Belief/Practice (Survey Question)	Mean	SD	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)
Belief 1 (22)	3.04	.44	0 0%	2 7.4%	22 81.5%	3 11.1%
Practice 1 (15)	3.11	.58	0 0%	3 11.1%	18 66.7%	6 22.2%
Belief 2 (7)	1.7	.78	12 44.4%	12 44.4%	2 3.7%	1 3.7%
Practice 2 (28)	1.81	.48	6 22.2%	20 74.1%	1 3.7%	0 0%
Belief 3 (33)	2.26	.71	4 14.8%	12 44.4%	11 40.7%	0 0%
Practice 3 (19)	2.11	.64	4 14.8%	16 59.3%	7 25.9%	0 0%

Table 4.4 Mean, SD, and Frequency Distribution of Belief and Practice Statements the in
Category of Role of Teacher.

Role of Teacher						
Belief/Practice (Survey Question)	Mean	SD	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)
Belief 1 (29)	1.89	.64	7 25.9%	16 59.3%	4 14.8%	0 0%
Practice 1 (12)	1.56	.89	17 63%	7 25.9%	1 3.7%	2 7.4%
Belief 2 (24)	2.07	.86	10 37%	6 22.2%	10 37%	1 3.7%
Practice 2 (37)	1.85	.66	8 29.6%	15 55.6%	4 14.8%	0 0%
Belief 3 (24)	2.59	.84	2 7.4%	11 40.7%	10 37%	4 14.8%
Practice 3 (20)	2.74	.76	1 3.7%	9 33.3%	13 48.1%	4 14.8%

Table 4.5 Mean, SD, and Frequency Distribution of Belief and Practice Statements in the
Category of Classroom Interaction.

Classroom Interaction						
Belief/Practice (Survey Question)	Mean	SD	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)
Belief 1 (14)	3.3	.54	0 0%	1 3.7%	17 63%	9 33.3%
Practice 1 (32)	3.41	.69	1 3.7%	0 0%	13 48.1%	13 48.1%
Belief 2 (27)	1.37	.69	19 70.4%	7 25.9%	0 0%	1 3.7%
Practice 2 (6)	1.63	1.04	18 66.7%	4 14.8%	2 7.4%	3 11.1%
Belief 3 (36)	1.41	.64	18 66.7%	7 25.9%	2 7.4%	0 0%
Practice 3 (18)	1.96	.65	5 18.5%	19 70.4%	2 7.4%	1 3.7%

Table 4.6 Mean, SD, and Frequency Distribution of Belief and Practice Statements in the Category of Planning and Conducting Lessons.

Planning and Conducting Lessons						
Belief/Practice (Survey Question)	Mean	SD	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)
Belief 1 (25)	2.19	.74	5 18.5%	12 44.4%	10 37%	0 0%
Practice 1 (4)	2.15	1.03	8 29.6%	11 40.7%	4 14.8%	4 14.8%
Belief 2 (9)	2	.73	5 18.5%	19 70.4%	1 3.7%	2 7.4%
Practice 2 (8)	1.85	.99	13 48.1%	7 25.9%	5 18.5%	2 7.4%
Belief 3 (10)	1.67	1.04	17 63%	5 18.5%	2 7.4%	3 11.1%
Practice 3 (38)	1.59	.69	14 51.9%	10 37%	3 11.1%	0 0%

Table 4.7 Mean, SD, and Frequency Distribution of Belief and Practice Statements of Career and Noncareer oriented TAs in the Category of Grammar Instruction.

Grammar Instruction												
Belief/Practice (Survey Question)					Career				Noncareer			
	Mean Career	Mean Noncareer	SD Career	SD Noncareer	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)
Belief 1 (5)	2.24	2.38	.75	.74	3 17.6%	7 41.2%	7 41.2%	0 0%	1 10%	5 50%	4 40%	0 0%
Practice 1 (21)	2.41	2.38	.8	.74	2 11.8%	7 41.2%	7 41.2%	1 5.9%	1 10%	5 50%	4 40%	0 0%
Belief 2 (16)	1.41	1.63	.8	.74	12 70.6%	4 23.8%	1 5.9%	0 0%	5 50%	4 40%	1 10%	0 0%
Practice 2 (26)	1.65	1.88	.86	.64	9 52.9%	6 35.3%	1 5.9%	1 5.9%	3 30%	6 60%	1 10%	0 0%
Belief 3 (31)	2.76	2.5	.83	.53	0 0%	8 47.1%	5 29.4%	4 23.5%	0 0%	5 50%	5 50%	0 0%
Practice 3 (11)	2.47	2.36	.8	.52	2 11.8%	6 35.3%	8 47.1%	1 5.9%	0 0%	6 60%	4 40%	0 0%

Table 4.8 Mean, SD, and Frequency Distribution of Belief and Practice Statements of Career and Noncareer TAs in the Category of Corrective Feedback.

Corrective Feedback												
Belief/Practice (Survey Question)					Career				Noncareer			
	Mean Career	Mean Noncareer	SD Career	SD Noncareer	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)
Belief 1 (22)	3	3.13	.5	.35	0 0%	2 11.8%	13 76.5%	2 11.8%	0 0%	0 0%	9 90%	1 10%
Practice 1 (15)	3.18	3	.53	.76	0 0%	1 5.9%	12 70.6%	4 23.5%	0 0%	2 20%	6 60%	2 20%
Belief 2 (7)	1.88	1.38	.86	.52	6 35.3%	8 47.1%	2 11.8%	1 5.9%	6 60%	4 40%	0 0%	0 0%
Practice 2 (28)	1.76	1.88	.56	.35	5 29.4%	11 64.7%	1 5.9%	0 0%	1 10%	9 90%	0 0%	0 0%
Belief 3 (33)	2.18	2.5	.81	.53	4 23.5%	7 41.2%	6 35.3%	0 0%	0 0%	6 60%	4 40%	0 0%
Practice 3 (19)	2.12	2.13	.78	.35	4 23.5%	7 41.2%	6 35.3%	0 0%	0 0%	9 90%	1 10%	0 0%

Table 4.9 Mean, SD, and Frequency Distribution of Belief and Practice Statements of Career and Noncareer TAs in the Category of Role of Teacher.

Role of Teacher												
Belief/Practice (Survey Question)					Career				Noncareer			
	Mean Career	Mean Noncareer	SD Career	SD Noncareer	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)
Belief 1 (29)	1.76	.75	2.12	.35	7 41.2%	7 41.2%	3 17.6%	0 0%	0 0%	9 90%	1 10%	0 0%
Practice 1 (12)	1.65	1.06	1.38	.52	11 64.7%	3 17.6%	1 5.9%	2 11.8%	6 60%	4 40%	0 0%	0 0%
Belief 2 (24)	2.06	1.03	2.13	.83	7 41.2%	3 17.6%	6 35.3%	1 5.9%	3 30%	3 30%	4 40%	0 0%
Practice 2 (37)	1.76	.75	2.13	.35	7 41.2%	7 41.2%	3 17.6%	0 0%	1 10%	8 80%	1 10%	0 0%
Belief 3 (34)	2.59	.94	2.5	.53	2 11.8%	6 35.3%	6 35.3%	3 17.6%	0 0%	5 50%	4 40%	1 10%
Practice 3 (20)	2.76	.75	2.63	.74	1 5.9%	4 23.5%	10 58.8%	2 11.8%	0 0%	5 50%	3 30%	2 20%

Table 4.10 Mean, SD, and Frequency Distribution of Belief and Practice Statements of Career and Noncareer TAs in the Category of Classroom Interaction.

Classroom Interaction												
Belief/Practice (Survey Question)					Career				Noncareer			
	Mean Career	Mean Noncareer	SD Career	SD Noncareer	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)
Belief 1 (14)	3.41	3	.62	0	0 0%	1 5.9%	8 47.1%	8 47.1%	0 0%	0 0%	9 90%	1 10%
Practice 1 (32)	3.35	3.38	.79	.52	1 5.9%	0 0%	8 47.1%	8 47.1%	0 0%	0 0%	5 50%	5 50%
Belief 2 (27)	1.48	1.25	.8	.46	11 64.7%	5 29.4%	0 0%	1 5.9%	8 80%	1 10%	1 10%	0 0%
Practice 2 (6)	1.82	1.25	1.19	.71	10 58.8%	3 17.6%	1 5.9%	3 17.6%	8 80%	1 10%	1 10%	0 0%
Belief 3 (36)	1.48	1.38	.72	.52	11 64.7%	4 23.5%	2 11.8%	0 0%	7 70%	3 30%	0 0%	0 0%
Practice 3 (18)	2	1.88	.79	.35	4 23.5%	10 58.8%	2 11.8%	1 5.9%	1 10%	9 90%	0 0%	0 0%

Table 4.11 Mean, SD, and Frequency Distribution of Belief and Practice Statements of Career and Noncareer TAs in the Category of Planning and Conducting Lessons.

Planning and Conducting Lessons												
Belief/Practice (Survey Question)					Career				Noncareer			
	Mean Career	Mean Noncareer	SD Career	SD Noncareer	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)
Belief 1 (25)	2.24	2	.75	.76	3 17.6%	7 41.2%	7 41.2%	0 0%	2 20%	5 50%	3 30%	0 0%
Practice 1 (4)	2.41	1.5	1.12	.53	4 23.5%	6 35.3%	3 17.6%	4 23.5%	4 40%	5 50%	1 10%	0 0%
Belief 2 (9)	2	1.88	.87	.35	4 23.5%	11 64.7%	0 0%	2 11.8%	1 10%	8 80%	1 10%	0 0%
Practice 2 (8)	1.82	1.75	1.13	.71	10 58.8%	2 11.8%	3 17.6%	2 11.8%	3 30%	5 50%	2 20%	0 0%
Belief 3 (10)	1.82	1.5	1.19	.76	10 58.8%	3 17.6%	1 5.9%	3 17.6%	7 70%	2 20%	1 10%	0 0%
Practice 3 (38)	1.53	1.62	.72	.74	10 58.8%	5 29.4%	2 11.8%	0 0%	4 40%	5 50%	1 10%	0 0%

Table 4.12 Mean Score Comparison between Career and Noncareer TAs.

Area	Question 1 Belief	Question 1 Practice	Question 2 Belief	Question 2 Practice	Question 3 Belief	Question 3 Practice
Grammar Instruction	.825	.713	.528	.602	.321	.783
Corrective Feedback	.576	.454	.120	.431	.442	.935
Role of the Teacher	.121	.498	.917	.328	.973	.837
Classroom Interaction	.096	.605	.333	.156	.512	.707
Planning and Conducting Lessons	.654	.05*	1	.834	.315	.548

*Significant difference in mean scores

Table 4.13 Correlations between Beliefs and Practices of Language TAs.

($n = 27$)

Areas of Investigation	Pearson Correlation Coefficients (2-tailed)
Grammar Instruction	.560**
Corrective Feedback	.355
Roles of the Teacher	.286
Classroom Interaction	.529**
Planning and Conducting Lessons	.804**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.14 Correlations between Beliefs and Practices of Career Oriented TAs.

($n = 17$)

Areas of Investigation	Pearson Correlation Coefficients (2-tailed)
Grammar Instruction	.637**
Corrective Feedback	.428
Role of the Teacher	.453
Classroom Interaction	.594*
Planning and Conducting Lessons	.820**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.15
Correlations between Beliefs and Practices of Noncareer Oriented TAs
($n = 10$)

Areas of Investigation	Pearson Correlation Coefficients (2-tailed)
Grammar Instruction	.122
Corrective Feedback	.190
Roles of the Teacher	.667*
Classroom Interaction	.039
Planning and Conducting Lessons	.786**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.16 Correlations of Belief and Practice Statements from the Questionnaire.

Grammar Instruction	Statement Pair 1	Statement Pair 2	Statement Pair 3
	.394*	.517**	.676**
Corrective Feedback	Statement Pair 1	Statement Pair 2	Statement Pair 3
	.593**	.361	.440*
Role of Teacher	Statement Pair 1	Statement Pair 2	Statement Pair 3
	.247	.564**	.724**
Classroom Interaction	Statement Pair 1	Statement Pair 2	Statement Pair 3
	.383*	.788**	.504**
Planning and Conducting Lessons	Statement Pair 1	Statement Pair 2	Statement Pair 3
	.624**	.742**	.392*

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.17 Teacher 1 Instructional Activities.

Stage	Description
Into (warm up/review, introduction, presentation)	There were no specific Into tasks that targeted learning.
Through (working with text and practice activities)	Group discussion Class discussion of answers from group discussion Brief lecture Group discussion Class discussion of answers from group discussion
Beyond (application)	There were no beyond tasks

Table 4.18 Teacher 2 Instructional Activities.

Stage	Description
Into (warm up/review, introduction, presentation)	Administrative Tasks
Through (working with text and practice activities)	Lecture Group/Individual Work
Beyond (application)	There were no beyond tasks

Table 4.19 Teacher 1 Observation Rubric Results.

Lesson Stages	Levels of Effectiveness			
	Not present (0)	Present and Ineffective (1)	Present and somewhat effective (2)	Present and effective (3)
"Intro"				
Lesson objectives are stated	X			
Lesson objectives vary demands on cognition	X			
Warm-up / review activity is conducted	X			
Key grammar points or main ideas are highlighted and reviewed		X		
New information is presented via multiple modalities			X	
New information is related to previously learned information			X	
"Through"				
There are opportunities for students to practice the new information			X	
The new information aligns with stated objectives	X			
Opportunities for students to interact with one another				X
New information is practiced			X	
Formative assessment of attainment of objectives is conducted			X	
Students are given opportunities to use their knowledge in a variety of ways			X	
"Beyond"				
There are opportunities for students to apply the new information in various contexts	X			
Review of key vocabulary/grammar and main ideas are conducted		X		
"Interaction"				
Instructor gives many opportunities for students to discuss the material presented in class			X	
Error correction is handled through recasts and explicit correction			X	
The instructor uses comprehension checks effectively		X		
Modified input is used to increase student comprehension		X		
Activities and lesson are conducted at i+1		X		
TOTALS	5	5	8	1

Table 4.20 Teacher 2 Observation Rubric Results.

Lesson Stages	Levels of Effectiveness			
	Not present (0)	Present and Ineffective (1)	Present and somewhat effective (2)	Present and effective (3)
"Info"				
Lesson objectives are stated		X		
Lesson objectives vary demands on cognition	X			
Warm-up / review activity is conducted		X		
Key grammar points or main ideas are highlighted and reviewed	X			
New information is presented via multiple modalities		X		
New information is related to previously learned information		X		
"Through"				
There are opportunities for students to practice the new information		X		
The new information aligns with stated objectives	X			
Opportunities for students to interact with one another		X		
New information is practiced		X		
Formative assessment of attainment of objectives is conducted		X		
Students are given opportunities to use their knowledge in a variety of ways	X			
"Beyond"				
There are opportunities for students to apply the new information in various contexts	X			
Review of key vocabulary/grammar and main ideas are conducted	X			
"Interaction"				
Instructor gives many opportunities for students to discuss the material presented in class	X			
Error correction is handled through recasts and explicit correction			X	
The instructor uses comprehension checks effectively		X		
Modified input is used to increase student comprehension			X	
Activities and lesson are conducted at i+1		X		
TOTALS	7	10	1	0

Table 4.21 Consistency of Teacher Beliefs and Observed Class for Teacher 1.

Consistent	Inconsistent
(22) The language errors students make in class should be corrected when they occur.	(5) Explicit grammar instruction is necessary in helping students achieve accuracy in a second language.
(33) Teachers should only correct students when their errors interfere with communication or when the content is inaccurate.	(16) Practicing an L2 in situations simulating real life, such as interviews and role plays, is a better way for students to improve oral language proficiency than analyzing grammar and doing grammar exercises
(29) When students are doing group activities, it is the teacher's responsibility to make sure every student is actively participating in the tasks, the activities are progressing as planned, and students finish within the time limit.	(31) Analyzing grammar patterns and doing grammar exercises are an effective way to help students improve their accuracy in writing.
(24) Teachers should actively interact with students when they are doing group activities.	(7) It is better for teachers to help students self-correct by drawing attention to their errors through questioning strategies or clarification techniques, etc. Rather than to overtly correct their errors.
(34) During group or pair work, teachers should offer assistance only when students ask for help or only when serious problems are detected.	(10) After giving instructions, teachers should conduct comprehension checks to make sure language students understand.
(14) When students interact with each other, they often acquire each other's mistakes.	
(27) In addition to working individually, students should have opportunities to work in both pairs and small groups.	
(36) Providing students with opportunities to interact with each other in pair and small-group work gives them an opportunity to negotiate the input they receive and make greater gains in the target language.	
(25) Teachers should depart from their lesson plans when they come up with activities that are more creative than the ones originally prepared.	
(9) Teachers should prepare a detailed lesson plan for every class they teach.	

Table 4.22 Consistency of Teacher Beliefs and Observed Class for Teacher 2.

Consistent	Inconsistent
(5) Explicit grammar instruction is necessary in helping students achieve accuracy in a second language.	(7) It is better for teachers to help students self-correct by drawing attention to their errors through questioning strategies or clarification techniques, etc. Rather than to overtly correct their errors.
(16) Practicing an L2 in situations simulating real life, such as interviews and role plays, is a better way for students to improve oral language proficiency than analyzing grammar and doing grammar exercises	(29) When students are doing group activities, it is the teacher's responsibility to make sure every student is actively participating in the tasks, the activities are progressing as planned, and students finish within the time limit.
(31) Analyzing grammar patterns and doing grammar exercises are an effective way to help students improve their accuracy in writing.	(27) In addition to working individually, students should have opportunities to work in both pairs and small groups.
(22) The language errors students make in class should be corrected when they occur.	(25) Teachers should depart from their lesson plans when they come up with activities that are more creative than the ones originally prepared.
(33) Teachers should only correct students when their errors interfere with communication or when the content is inaccurate.	
(24) Teachers should actively interact with students when they are doing group activities.	
(34) During group or pair work, teachers should offer assistance only when students ask for help or only when serious problems are detected.	
(14) When students interact with each other, they often acquire each other's mistakes.	
(36) Providing students with opportunities to interact with each other in pair and small-group work gives them an opportunity to negotiate the input they receive and make greater gains in the target language.	
(9) Teachers should prepare a detailed lesson plan for every class they teach.	
(10) After giving instructions, teachers should conduct comprehension checks to make sure language students understand.	

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this section, the results of the study are discussed in terms of how they answer the original research questions. First, the results from the quantitative portion of the study are discussed in two parts: descriptive and inferential. The descriptive portion focuses on what can be gained from looking at the frequency and distribution of responses to the online questionnaire by the entire language TA population in this study. Next, I discuss the differences in frequency and distribution of responses of the career and noncareer oriented TAs. The inferential portion is then discussed in terms of the correlation between belief and practice statement responses for the two groups in this study. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss how data from classroom observation and follow-up interview relate to language TA responses on the questionnaire, as well as themes and implications. For convenience, the research questions for this study are listed in Table 5.1.

Discussion of the Quantitative Data

The Quantitative portion of this study sought to answer four specific research questions:

1. What are the teaching beliefs and practice of language TAs as measured on an

online questionnaire?

2. Do career and noncareer oriented TAs differ in self-reported teaching beliefs and practices as measured through an online questionnaire?
3. How do career and noncareer oriented TAs differ in self-reported teaching beliefs and practices as measured through an online questionnaire?
4. Is there a correlation between the self-reported beliefs and practices of graduate teaching assistants as reported on an online questionnaire?

The first three research questions were answered through the descriptive part of the quantitative data by looking at how the study population responded to paired belief and practice statements on an online questionnaire. These statement pairs were divided into five specific categories: grammar instruction, corrective feedback, role of the teacher, classroom interaction, and planning and conducting lessons. One of the purposes of the questionnaire was to see what teaching beliefs and behaviors language TAs had, and to compare how career and noncareer oriented TAs responded. In this section I discuss, through each of the five areas of belief and practice statements, research Questions 1 and 2.

Grammar Instruction

Belief and practice statement pair responses were split, indicating that language TAs are conflicted about explicit grammar instruction. There are many possible reasons for this. One possible reason is the popularity of a more student centered communicative teaching approach. Communicative language teaching (CLT) began to become popular in the 1970s, and has continued to be popular ever since (Savignon, 2002). In fact, at the

institution in which this study was conducted, there are methodology classes that focus specifically on developing a CLT approach. While this could possibly explain the respondents that did not agree with belief and practice Statement 1, over half of respondents agreed that explicit grammar instruction was necessary and that they practiced this in their language classes. Explicit grammar instruction was popular before CLT, and it continues to be practiced in mainstream language classes. Also, many of the language TAs have most likely had personal experience learning a language through explicit grammar instruction. Many teachers base their teaching beliefs after their own experiences as a student (Farrell, 2009), so if they experience explicit grammar instruction as a major component of their language learning experience, this may affect their own teaching beliefs.

Another possible reason for this split on explicit grammar instruction may be in fact slightly more complicated than personal experience and pedagogy popularity. It may be entirely possible that in this instance, more language TAs actually prefer CLT; however, it is the demands of the student that cause them to favor explicit grammar instruction. Oftentimes instructors prefer CLT; however, as students they prefer formal and explicit grammar instruction (Brindley et al., 1984). Balancing what students expect from a teacher, and being an effective teacher can be a difficult thing. Thus, if students prefer or even demand explicit grammar instruction, the teacher may become more inclined to offer it.

What is most likely the reason for the inconsistency related to explicit grammar instruction is that CLT is popular among teachers and is one of the best ways to teach a language and empower students; however, personal experiences as language learners also

shape teachers' beliefs. Thus, if an instructor had personal experiences with explicit grammar instruction, and felt that students expected and preferred explicit grammar instruction, even if the instructor has been exposed to CLT, they may still prefer explicit grammar instruction. Another possible reason for the inconsistency is that explicit grammar instruction may be easier to implement for novice teachers than CLT. Explicit grammar teaching in itself can fulfill many classroom management needs, such as appeasing students, contributing to the pace of a lesson, and making fluency more relevant to students (Borg, 1998).

Participants were also inconsistent between belief and practice statements related to analyzing grammar patterns and doing grammar exercises as an effective way to help students improve their accuracy in writing. One possible reason for the inconsistency could be the nature of the classes that language TAs teach. In ESL and higher level language classes, there may not be as strong of a focus on grammar. For instance, an ESL writing class may focus more strongly on paragraph-level discourse instead of grammar patterns, and with novice teachers unfamiliar with content-based instruction (CBI) class there may not be explicit attention to grammatical patterns.

Another possible reason for the inconsistency between belief and practice related to analyzing grammar patterns as an effective way to improve accuracy in writing may have to do with attitudes. TAs might feel that analyzing grammar patterns is not necessarily very important, because over time and with exposure students will be able to pick up the grammar patterns implicitly. However, this again touches on the tension between explicit grammar instruction and CLT. Language TAs seem to overwhelmingly agree on belief and practice statements about CLT, but show a wider range of responses

when it comes to explicit grammar instruction. One reason for this may be the stigmatization of previous grammar translation models of language teaching which did focus heavily on grammar patterns.

Corrective Feedback

From the responses collected, language TAs generally agreed with belief and practice statements on corrective feedback: implicit error correction is more productive, and that students should only be corrected if communication or content is in question. These beliefs show that participants were unaware of research in the area of error correction. The majority of participants indicated that they believe guiding students to self-correct is much more productive than overt correction. However, this belief does not recognize such theories as the noticing hypothesis. The noticing hypothesis claims that “~~in~~take is that part of the input that the learner notices” (Schmidt, 1990, p. 139). Noticing requires focused attention and awareness by the learner. Thus, while implicit self-correction serves to lower negative affect, it may not draw attention to the actual errors the student is making; if the student is not aware of their errors, they are unlikely to learn from their mistakes. There is also research to support that explicit instruction is effective and often necessary (Norris & Ortega, 2000).

Responses to the corrective feedback statements illustrate language TAs belief in CLT. Immediate explicit correction rarely takes place in a CLT classroom, because it overlooks second language acquisition (SLA) insights about the gradual and complex process of acquiring the forms and structures of a second language (Truscott, 1996). Immediate explicit correction of oral production was a defining part of behaviorism,

where all efforts were taken so that errors did not become a habit, since language acquisition under this framework was all about habit formation.

In looking at how career and noncareer oriented TAs responded differently, the frequency and distribution of responses by both groups are again quite similar. One way of interpreting the data is that the career oriented TAs were more confident in their beliefs and practices. It is possible that the career group was more aware of how they dealt with error correction in their language classes.

Role of Teacher

There was one statement pair in which there was inconsistency. Belief and practice Statements 24 and 37 asked if “Teachers should actively interact with students when they are doing group activities,” and if they “...frequently interact with students when they are doing group activities.” Of the respondents, 40.7% indicated that they did not believe that teachers needed to actively interact with students during group activities. However, with the corresponding practice statement, over 80% of participants indicated that they did frequently interact with students during this time.

One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that language TAs believe that interacting with students during group activities may interfere with the students work. If the teacher is interacting with students while they attempt to do their group work, students may not be able to finish the activity completely or in time. Group work is group work; it is not a private lesson from the instructor. By actively interacting with students during group activities, it is very easy for a student-centered activity to become teacher-centered. However, the corresponding practice statement indicated that over 80% of

participants frequently interact with students during group activities.

One possible reason for why language TAs believe that they frequently interact with students during group activities is the instinct to remain in control, even when the lesson is student centered. “Novice teachers’ idealized concerns (the ideal of teaching before experiencing the reality of teaching) are abruptly replaced by challenges of survival in the classroom. They are also concerned about classroom management issues and the content of instruction” (Tsui, 2003,).

As a group the respondents were split on Statements 34 and 20—if they believed that “During group or pair work, teachers should offer assistance only when students ask for help or only when serious problems are detected,” and if “During group or pair work, I only interact with students when they ask for help or when I detect a serious problem.” Forty eight percent agreed with the belief statement and 37% agreed with the practice statement. What these data show are that language TAs as a group are not sure of what they should be doing as instructors while students are working in groups. This is again consistent with the novice teacher who is still developing their teaching beliefs and practices. They are concerned with classroom management and are unsure how to best serve students when the lesson is student centered.

Classroom Interaction

Responses in this category indicated that TAs support student interaction and communicative learning. One reason why language TAs feel that student interaction and communicative learning is beneficial to students may be because of their exposure to CLT, second language acquisition (SLA) theory, or both. All participants in this study

were either linguistics or languages and literature graduate students. While it is expected that career oriented TAs will have had course work in both CLT and SLA, noncareer oriented TAs will most likely have also had some exposure to SLA, either formally through classroom instruction or informally through discussions with their peers, which may have influenced how they responded to the belief and practice statements, as well as to how they teach.

Planning and Conducting Lessons

There was, however, one statement in which the career and noncareer groups responded quite differently from each other. Practice Statement 4 asked if participants departed from their lesson plan when a creative idea occurred to them during the class. The career group was split on this issue while 90% of the noncareer agreed with the statement. The results of a *t*-test also indicated there is a significant difference between how both groups responded to this question.

One possible reason for the difference is that more members of the career group are unsure if they depart from their lesson plans. A possible reason for this difference is that career oriented TAs are learning about planning for instruction and in the process of changing how they view departures from lesson plans. While it may seem intuitive to build on teachable moments by departing from a lesson plan, language TAs may feel the pressure to meet objectives and to address the academic needs of their students.

Differences between Career and Noncareer Oriented TAs

As a group, the TAs responded very similarly on the questionnaire, agreeing and disagreeing with the same belief and practice statements. However, career oriented TAs responded more strongly than the noncareer group, having many more strong agree and strongly disagree responses. One possible reason for stronger beliefs is that career oriented TAs may have been exposed to more pedagogy and SLA through course work and discussion with colleagues. Stronger confidence in what they do in the classroom may be due to self-reflection and evaluation. “In the later stage, novice teachers become more concerned about their teaching performance, and this includes noticing their perceived limitations and the frustrations of the teaching context” (Tsui, 2003).

Correlation of Teaching Beliefs and Practices

The areas that had correlation were: grammar instruction, classroom interaction, planning and conducting lessons. This result is not surprising, since the three areas that show correlation all relate to the immediate survival needs of novice teachers. For novice teachers — the focus is necessarily on the mechanics of presentation and on engineering students’ language learning and practice” (Brinton & Holten, 1989, p. 345). Beginning language teachers are often unprepared to face the realities of the classroom (Farrell, 2001). Because of this, novice teachers will often focus on the immediate concerns of running a class, in this case, how to teach grammar, how to interact with students in the classroom, and how to plan and conduct a lesson.

The areas where there was no correlation are often not related to basic survival. There was no correlation between belief/practice statements on corrective feedback and

role of the teacher. Learning and realizing how to provide constructive feedback to students, and what the role of a teacher is, are two things that are outside of the immediate scope of novice teachers. Giving meaningful feedback and realizing the role of a teacher in the classroom are things that take experience and self-reflection; thus, it is not surprising that there was no correlation in these categories.

One possible reason for why the noncareer group demonstrated correlation between belief and practice statements in the area of the role of the teacher and the career group did not is that developing knowledge about teaching makes the career oriented group unsure of their role as teachers. “Over their careers teachers construct and reconstruct a conceptual sense of *who* they are and this is manifested through *what* they do” (Farrell, 2011). For the career group, because they are interested in language teaching, they are in a state of analysis and modification, which shows up in their teaching practices.

Quantitative Research Questions

In this study, I set out to answer four research questions based on the quantitative data. In this section I discuss each of these questions

1. What are the teaching beliefs and practice of language TAs as measured on an online questionnaire?

In general, language TAs believe in a CLT approach to language instruction. They agree with teaching beliefs that agree with CLT, such as the importance of a student-centered classroom and interactive learning. Language TAs in this study believe that corrective feedback should be implicit, and that errors should only be explicitly addressed

if they interfere with communication or if the content is wrong. They believe that the role of the teacher is to supervise activities and to offer assistance when needed. In the classroom students should be given opportunities to work in groups and to negotiate meaning. They also believe that teachers should prepare a detailed lesson plan for each class but should not be afraid to depart from the lesson plan when an opportunity presents itself. In addition, they believe they should conduct comprehension checks after giving instructions.

While language TAs indicate that they believe and practice most of the statements on the questionnaire, there are some things that they are unsure of. When it comes to explicit grammar instruction, language TAs are polarized in their beliefs and practices; many believe that explicit grammar instruction is necessary, while others do not.

2. Do career and noncareer oriented TAs differ in self-reported teaching beliefs and practices?

Overall there are no drastic differences between the two groups; both groups had similar trends in terms of their agreement or disagreement with belief/practice statement pairs. Both groups tended to agree and disagree to the same belief/practice statement pairs, and were split on similar belief/practice statements. While there was one specific practice statement in which both groups responded differently, this was only 1 of 30 belief and practice statements.

3. How do career and noncareer oriented TAs differ in self-reported teaching beliefs and practices as measured through an online questionnaire?

Both career and noncareer oriented TAs generally agree and disagree with the same belief and practice statements. Descriptively there is no major difference between

the two groups in terms of agreement and disagreement to belief/practice statements. However, there is a difference in the degree to which they agree or disagree with belief/practice statements.

Career oriented TAs have stronger opinions of their teaching beliefs and practices than noncareer oriented TAs. Career oriented TAs feel more secure of their teaching beliefs and practices because of more exposure to methodology, pedagogy, and SLA coursework, and also because they are likely more self-reflective of what happens in their classrooms. Noncareer oriented TAs, while also having exposure to certain course work related to SLA, are not as certain of their beliefs and practices in the classroom. This may be due to lack of knowledge or self-reflection.

One major difference between the two groups is their opinion on whether or not they depart from a lesson plan. Noncareer oriented TAs indicate that they do depart from the lesson plan when a creative moment occurs, while career oriented TAs are split. The cause for this may be due to having more awareness of what is taking place in the classroom, or the more student-centered lesson plans that career oriented TAs may have.

4. Is there a correlation between the self-reported beliefs and practices of graduate teaching assistants as reported on an online questionnaire?

There is a correlation between the self-reported beliefs and practices of graduate teaching assistants as reported on an online questionnaire in specific areas. The areas that have correlation are: grammar instruction, classroom interaction, and planning and conduction lessons. Graduate teaching assistants had correlation in areas that are associated with their immediate survival as a teacher. Noncareer oriented TAs differed from the career group in that they had correlation in fewer categories.

Discussion of the Qualitative Portion of This Study

In this section I will discuss the results obtained from the qualitative portion of this study. The qualitative portion of this study consisted of a classroom observation and follow up interview. The purpose of having a qualitative component of this study was to gain more insight into the self-perceived teaching beliefs and practices of language TAs through a thematic analysis, and to see how these self-perceived teaching beliefs and teaching practices compared to the responses given on the questionnaire.

The research questions concerning the qualitative portion of this study are listed below:

5. What are the teaching practices of TAs as measured using a lesson taxonomy?
6. Are the self-reported beliefs and practices of language TAs consistent with classroom observation?
7. How do language TA beliefs about the role of the teacher and student affect how they teach?

To answer research Question 5, a taxonomy was used during the classroom observation. This taxonomy consisted of Into, Through, and Beyond lesson stages, as well as some best practices associated with each of these stages. During classroom observations, items on this taxonomy were marked as not present, present and ineffective, present and somewhat effective, and present and effective. Table 4.19 lists the results of the classroom observations using this taxonomy. While both teachers had a wide range of ratings on the taxonomy, based on the taxonomy alone, Teacher 1 was the more effective instructor: Teacher 1 had eight items that were present and somewhat effective, and one item that was present and effective, while Teacher 2 had only two items that were present

and somewhat effective.

What the data from Table 4.19 show is that both teachers were not effective with the majority of the taxonomy items; in fact, both teachers had many items that were completely absent from their lesson. What this indicates, especially when looking at items that were present and ineffective, is that teachers were not aware of the effectiveness of what they were doing. This is representative of novice teachers. Novice teachers may learn about what they should do in planning and conducting their lessons, however, it is only through experience and education that teachers become more aware of the effectiveness of their teaching practices.

To answer research Question 6, survey responses were compared to what was observed during a classroom observation of 2 TAs. Two TAs were recruited, each as a representative for either the career or noncareer group. Each TA was observed during one of their classes, and their responses to the questionnaire compared to the classroom observation. Results show that both Teacher 1 (career) and Teacher 2 (noncareer) displayed inconsistencies between the teaching beliefs indicated on the survey and what was observed during the classroom observation.

For Teacher 1, these inconsistencies involved teaching beliefs related to grammar instruction, error correction, checking for comprehension, and providing students with situations simulating real life. Teacher 1 indicated that he believed that explicit grammar instruction was necessary for improving accuracy in a second language, however, all aspects of grammar instruction were absent in the class observed. Teacher 1 also indicated that he believed that practicing an L2 in situations simulating real life is a better way for students to improve oral language proficiency than analyzing grammar and doing

grammar exercises; however, there were no instances of this present in his class. Finally, Teacher 1 also indicated that he believed that comprehension checks should be conducted in order to see if students understand instructions. While there were attempts at comprehension checks, these were typically yes/no questions, which in practice did not measure comprehension.

The most likely explanation for these discrepancies between self-reported teaching beliefs and actual classroom observation are due to lack of reflection and experience. For example, with error correction and comprehension checks, Teacher 1 indicated that he believed guiding students to self-correct is much more productive than giving explicit error correction and that comprehension checks should be conducted to check for student comprehension. These two tasks are often overlooked or not used effectively by novice teachers. Novice teachers are so focused on their immediate survival needs, that while they might believe one thing, they may practice another. In this case, Teacher 1 believed implicit error correction is better than explicit, and that he does this in class. However, while he may intend to guide students to self-correct, his lack of experience often led him to provide answers to students unconsciously. The same can be said with comprehension checks. While novice teachers believe they are conducting comprehension checks, in practice, they are not measuring comprehension at all.

Teacher 2 also had inconsistencies between the teaching beliefs indicated on the survey and classroom observation. Specifically, Teacher 2's inconsistencies focused around corrective feedback, role of the teacher, and planning and conducting lessons. It is likely that the reason for these inconsistencies were again due to the nature of being a novice or inexperienced teacher. Teacher 2 indicated that he believed guiding students to

self-correct was more productive than explicit error correction; however, during the observation Teacher 2 would often give explicit error correction. Again, the reason for these types of inconsistencies is due to lack of awareness that stems from not having enough teaching experience and ability to self-reflect.

Research Question 7 asked, “How do language TA beliefs about the role of the teacher and student affect how they teach?” To answer this question, follow up interviews were conducted with the 2 TAs who were observed. Each interview consisted of a prepared set of questions, as well as unique questions for each teacher based on the classroom observation. From each interview, major themes were identified.

There were two major themes that were constructed from the interview with Teacher 1: A teacher should serve as not only a resource but should also provide students with authentic like input, and guide students to explore language and ideas amongst themselves. Teacher 1 also stressed the importance of group work.

During the interview, Teacher 1 stressed a number of times how important it was to provide students with authentic like input, typically in the form of language that they were likely to encounter outside of the classroom. This primarily took the form of purposely not modifying verbal input towards students. The types of discussion that Teacher 1 favored also reflected this theme. Teacher 1 regularly had students discuss their opinions about real life issues, such as racism, discrimination, and politics. These were not the typical type of discussion questions for a language learning class.

For Teacher 1, group work was a vital part of the language and content learning experience. Group work allowed students to use one another as resources, and as a way for students to practice what they have learned. By using group activities, there is less

pressure on individual students, Groups allow students to increase their comprehension of content and to practice new language skills. Because of this, it seems that almost all of Teacher 1's class activities are grouped based, much like what was observed during the observation. In short, the beliefs that Teacher 1 felt most strongly about were directly in the way he taught his language class.

For Teacher 2, two main themes also emerged: The role of a teacher is to simplify the materials in class texts and to be available to students. The teacher acts as an expert on class material, and should be actively approached by students with questions. This was illustrated in how Teacher 2 described a typical class. The teacher presents the students with information and then gives students a task to do. It is not the teacher's responsibility to give students feedback; if students desire feedback, they need to self-analyze their own knowledge, and then approach the teacher with specific questions. This was also consistent with the classroom observation. During group work, students were allowed to work in groups, or individually, on exercises from the textbook. Teacher 2 would circulate around the room just to see if students had any questions. If there were no questions, Teacher 2 would move on to another part of the room.

This result was not surprising. Beliefs shape how preservice teachers interpret and respond to knowledge and experiences during teacher training (Chong & Low, 2009). In the case of the 2 teachers in the qualitative portion of this study, teaching beliefs directly affected teaching practices. What the thematic analysis showed though was that teaching beliefs can vary greatly among novice teachers. Teacher 1 believed that teachers should provide students with authentic like input and guide students to explore language and ideas with each other. This is in direct contrast with Teacher 2's belief that teachers

should primarily serve as experts of the content, and that students need to self-assess their own needs and approach the teacher with specific questions. Thus, while teaching beliefs can vary greatly, ~~beliefs~~ beliefs about language learning showed their effects on the preservice teachers' instructional practices" (Incecay, 2011, p. 36). Beliefs can filter the ways teachers conceptualize teaching, as well as their own identity as teachers, and may develop explanations for their own classroom practices, which may lead to a narrow view of teachers and teaching as well as limit the range of instructional considerations that they are willing to consider (Johnson, 1999).

Summary of Qualitative Research Questions

The qualitative portion of this study consisted of three research questions.

5. What are the teaching practices of TAs as measured using a lesson taxonomy?

The teaching practices of TAs as measured using a lesson planning scoring rubric are those representative of novice teachers. The abundance of items that were ranked as ~~not present~~ "not present" show that TAs are not aware of or do not acknowledge the importance of certain aspects of best practices. The abundance of items that were ranked as ~~present and ineffective~~ "present and ineffective" also shows that TAs are novice teachers. For these items, TAs were unable to gauge the effectiveness of their practices. Thus, while items from the taxonomy were present, the majority of them were ranked as ineffective. For this study, the career oriented TA was more effective in terms of having more taxonomy items ranked as ~~present and somewhat effective~~ "present and somewhat effective" and ~~present and effective~~ "present and effective."

6. Are the self-reported beliefs and practices of language TAs consistent with classroom observation?

While there were many consistencies between self-reported teaching beliefs and practices and classroom observation, there were also inconsistencies. The results from this part of the study show that while beliefs and practices were highly consistent, actual teaching practices were not always consistent. The reason for this discrepancy is most likely due to the fact that both teachers are still novices and are unaware of these discrepancies themselves.

7. How do language TA beliefs about the role of the teacher and student affect how they teach?

Language TA beliefs about the role of the teacher and student had a large impact on how they taught. In looking at the themes that came out of the interview data, the 2 teachers that participated in this part of the study had strikingly different beliefs. These beliefs though were very consistent with the practices that were observed during the classroom observation. While the quantitative portion of this study indicated that both career and noncareer groups had similar beliefs, the qualitative portion of this study showed that self-reported beliefs and practices are not necessarily reflective of TAs beliefs on the role of the teacher and student. Thus, results from this research showed that there is indeed a strong tie between teaching beliefs, beliefs about practice, and actual practices.

Table 5.1 Research Questions

Quantitative Questions	
1.	What are the teaching beliefs and practices of language TAs as measured on an online questionnaire?
2.	Do career and noncareer oriented TAs differ in self-reported teaching beliefs and practices as measured through an online questionnaire?
3.	How do career and noncareer oriented TAs differ in self-reported teaching beliefs and practices as measured through an online questionnaire?
4.	Is there a correlation between the self-reported beliefs and self-reported practices of graduate teaching assistants as reported on an online questionnaire?
Qualitative Questions	
5.	What are the teaching practices of TAs as measured using a lesson taxonomy?
6.	Are the self-reported beliefs and and self-reported practices of language TAs consistent with classroom observation?
7.	How do language TA beliefs about the role of the teacher and student affect how they teach?

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Personal Information

- i. What is your Gender?
A) Male B) Female
- ii. What is your Age?
A) 18-35 B) 36+
- iii. What is your first language?
A) English B) Other
- iv. In what region were you born?
A) North America B) South America B) Asia C)
Europe
E) Africa C) Other: _____
- v. How many years have you been teaching a language?
A) 0-1 years B) 2-4 years C) 5+ years
- vi. Is language teaching enjoyable for you most of the time?
A) Yes B) No D) Not sure
- vii. Do you plan on teaching language as part of your career?
A) Yes B) No C) Not sure

- viii. Do you want to continue teaching language over the next 5 years?
- A) Yes C) No
- ix. What degree do you have? Circle your highest degree.
- A) Bachelors B) Masters C) PhD D) none
- x. If you answered ~~yes~~ to #ix, where did you receive your undergraduate degree?
- A) Institution in the U.S. B) Non U.S. Institution C) Both
- xi. What was your undergraduate major?
- A) Education endorsement B) Applied linguistics C) Foreign language(s)
- D) Communications E) History F) Science
- G) Other: _____
- xii. How many classes on teaching, L2 methodology, or L2 pedagogy classes have you taken/attended?
- A) 1-2 B) 3-4 C) 5+ D) none
- xiii. In which country did you take/attend these classes?
- A) U.S. B) Outside of the U.S. C) None taken
- xiv. How often do you read research articles about language teaching/learning?
- A) Frequently B) Sometimes C) Seldom D) Never
- xv. How often do you reflect upon or think about your own teaching?
- A) Frequently B) Sometimes C) Seldom D)

Never

xvi. If you reflect on your own teaching, how do you do so?

- A) Teaching journal B) Discussion with colleagues C) Writing
down notes to yourself after class D) Think about teaching when you
have time

xvii. Do you regularly observe your colleagues or others teaching?

- A) Yes B) No

xviii. Do you often discuss teaching issues with your colleague in order to improve your
teaching?

- Yes B) No

Teaching Beliefs and Teaching Behavior

Note: The reference to *students* in the following questions is to adult language
learners (18+ years old).

1= Strongly Agree 2= Agree 3= Disagree 4= Strongly Disagree

Please read the following statements and choose the number that best represents
your opinion for each statement.

1) I believe that classroom instruction works best when it is teacher centered.

1 2 3 4

2) I believe that classroom instruction works best when it is student centered.

1 2 3 4

- 3) I believe that there is an ideal way to teach for language classes and that we should try to find it.
- 1 2 3 4
- 4) I depart from my lesson plan when a creative idea occurs to me during the class.
- 1 2 3 4
- 5) Explicit grammar instruction is necessary in helping students achieve accuracy in a second language.
- 1 2 3 4
- 6) I vary group structure in my class so that students are involved in individual work, pair work, and small-group work.
- 1 2 3 4
- 7) It is better for teachers to help students self-correct by drawing attention to their errors through questioning strategies or clarification techniques, etc. rather than to overtly correct their errors.
- 1 2 3 4
- 8) I have a lesson plan for every class I teach.
- 1 2 3 4
- 9) Teachers should prepare a detailed lesson plan for every class they teach.
- 1 2 3 4
- 10) After giving instructions, teachers should conduct comprehension checks to make sure language students understand.
- 1 2 3 4
- 11) In order to help students learn how to apply grammar rules in writing, I ask them

to analyze grammar patterns and do grammar exercises.

1 2 3 4

- 12) When students are doing group activities, I monitor the activities and make certain students are on task, activities are progressing smoothly, and students finish within the time limit.

1 2 3 4

- 13) If students raise issues irrelevant to the topic of that day or ask unrelated question, teachers should find a way to respond without departing from the lesson plan.

1 2 3 4

- 14) When students interact with each other, they often acquire each other's mistakes.

1 2 3 4

- 15) I try to correct students' errors in oral language production as soon as they occur.

1 2 3 4

- 16) Practicing an L2 in situations simulating real life, such as interviews and role plays, is a better way for students to improve oral language proficiency than analyzing grammar and doing grammar exercises.

1 2 3 4

- 17) Visuals can distract students' attention from focusing on important content.

1 2 3 4

- 18) My students frequently have opportunities to negotiate the input they receive.

1 2 3 4

- 19) I only correct students when their errors hinder communication or when the content is inaccurate.

1 2 3 4

20) During group or pair work, I only interact with students when they ask for help or when I detect a serious problem.

1 2 3 4

21) I give explicit grammar instruction in the classes I teach.

1 2 3 4

22) The language errors students make in class should be corrected when they occur.

1 2 3 4

23) It is important to speak a foreign language with an excellent accent.

1 2 3 4

24) Teachers should actively interact with students when they are doing group activities.

1 2 3 4

25) Teachers should depart from their lesson plans when they come up with activities that are more creative than the ones originally prepared.

1 2 3 4

26) In order to help students learn how to apply grammar rules in speaking, I involve students in meaningful communicative activities.

1 2 3 4

27) In addition to working individually, students should have opportunities to work in both pairs and small groups.

1 2 3 4

28) I often guide students to self-correct.

1 2 3 4

29) When students are doing group activities, it is the teacher's responsibility to make sure every student is actively participating in the tasks, the activities are progressing as planned, and students finish within the time limit.

1 2 3 4

30) It is easier to read and write a foreign language than to speak and understand it.

1 2 3 4

31) Analyzing grammar patterns and doing grammar exercises are an effective way to help students improve their accuracy in writing.

1 2 3 4

32) I limit student interaction in class activities.

1 2 3 4

33) Teachers should only correct students when their errors interfere with communication or when the content is inaccurate.

1 2 3 4

34) During group or pair work, teachers should offer assistance only when students ask for help or only when serious problems are detected.

1 2 3 4

35) Children are better language learners than adults in an instructional setting.

1 2 3 4

36) Providing students with opportunities to interact with each other in pair and small-group work gives them an opportunity to negotiate the input they receive and make greater gains in the target language.

1 2 3 4

37) I frequently interact with students when they are doing group activities.

1 2 3 4

*Adapted from Qing, 2009

APPENDIX B

ESL TEACHER OBSERVATION RUBRIC

Instructor Name:

Observer:

Observation Date:

Course:

Lesson Stages	Levels of Effectiveness			
	Not present (0)	Present and Ineffective (1)	Present and somewhat effective (2)	Present and effective (3)
“Intro”				
Lesson objectives are stated.				
Lesson objectives vary demands on cognition.				
A warm-up / review activity is conducted.				
Key grammar points or main ideas are highlighted and reviewed for learners.				
New information is presented via multiple modalities.				
New information is related to previously learned information.				

Lesson Stages	Levels of Effectiveness			
	Not present (0)	Present and Ineffective (1)	Present and somewhat effective (2)	Present and effective (3)
“Through”				
There are opportunities for students to practice the new information.				
The new information aligns with stated objectives.				
There are opportunities for students to interact with one another.				
New information is practiced.				
Formative assessment is conducted.				
Students are given opportunities to use their knowledge in a variety of ways.				
“Beyond”				
There are opportunities for students to apply the new information.				
There is a review of key vocabulary, grammar points, or the main ideas.				
“Interaction”				
Instructor gives many opportunities for students to discuss and interact with the material presented in class.				
Error correction is handled through recasts, rather than explicit correction.				
The instructor uses comprehension checks.				
Modified input is used to increase student comprehension.				

Adapted from Christison, M. A. and Palmer, A. S. (2003) *Rubric for ESL TA Evaluation* and Christison, M.A. (2007) *A Conceptual Framework for Content and Language Integration*.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Teacher 1

1. What do you feel is the role of the teacher in a classroom?
 - a. Was this the role that your own teachers played?
 - b. How well do you feel that you meet this role in this class?
 - c. What do you feel is the best way to teach? What makes an ideal teacher?
 - i. How should they teach a class? Why?
 - ii. What should they be responsible for in class? Why?
 - iii. What can they do to help students learn effectively?
2. Do you feel that there is a rhythm to the classes you teach? Meaning that there are different stages to each class? Why or why not?
3. Have you ever taught a language/grammar class before?
 - a. Did you feel prepared to teach when you first started?
 - b. Did you feel that the ESL TA meetings help you to be even more prepared for teaching?
4. What do you feel is the role of the student? What is it that a student is ‘supposed’ to do during class?
 - a. How does this view relate to your own experiences?
 - b. How do you feel your own students meet this role in this class?
 - c. What do you feel is the best way for students to learn?
5. How do you plan for your classes? Do you create lesson plans?
 - a. Why or why not?
6. This class that you teach isn't a traditional language classroom. What do you think is the purpose and goal of this class for language learners?

- a. What are some things you to do achieve these goals?
 - b. Were these goals explicit to you? How did you establish these goals?
- 7. How do you normally begin your classes? Do you have procedures? Such as reviewing assignments? If so, what are they?
 - a. What do you feel is the purpose of this?
- 8. I noticed that you mostly used group activities during your class. Can you talk to me about your reason for this choice?
 - a. Do you feel that students are able to learn and process information better by working in groups or by any other method such as lecturing?
 - b. During the class I observed, you broke groups into 3 groups for each article, 12 groups total. What is your reasoning for dividing your class of 40+ into such small groups?
 - i. Do you feel that more is accomplished in small groups? Why or why not?
 - c. Do you primarily use group work as a vehicle for learning? If not, what do you use?
- 9. What is your opinion about error correction as it relates to language errors?
 - a. Does this apply to this class? Why or why not?
 - b. How do you correct students in your class in general?
- 10. In the class I observed, after group discussions you called upon individual groups to answer questions. However, a few groups answered that they didn't have anything to add. What is your opinion of this?
 - a. How do you check to see that each group has accomplished their task?
 - b. Does each group accomplish their tasks for the most part? Is this important?
- 11. How active should a teacher be (i.e., what should a teacher do?) when students are participating in group work?
- 12. Do you see your class as being more teacher centered, or more student centered?
 - a. Is this intentional?
 - b. Why or why not?
- 13. I noticed that during this class that I observed, you spoke very normally, meaning that it felt like you talked to you students the same way you would talk to a native

English speaking friend. Is this observation accurate?

- a. Do you feel that the way a teacher speaks towards language learners should be different? Why?
- b. You also used quite a few expressions and slang. Was this on purpose? Why or why not?

14. Students often ask questions what may seem unrelated to the tasks or subject matter of the lesson. What do you do when this happens? How do you handle these sorts of questions?

Teacher 2

1. What do you feel is the role of the teacher in a classroom?
 - a. Was this the role that your own teachers played?
 - b. How well do you feel that you meet this role in this class?
 - c. What do you feel is the best way to teach? What do you think makes an ideal teacher?
 - i. How should they teach a class? Why?
 - ii. What should they be responsible for in class? Why?
 - iii. What can they do to help students learn effectively?
2. Do you feel that there is a rhythm to the classes you teach? Meaning that there are different stages to each class? Why or why not?
3. Have you ever taught a language/grammar class before?
 - a. Did you feel prepared to teach when you first started?
 - b. Did you feel that the ESL TA meetings help you to be even more prepared for teaching?
4. What do you feel is the role of the student? What is it that a student is supposed to do during class?
 - a. How does this view relate to your own experiences?
 - b. How do you feel your own students meet this role in this class?
 - c. What do you feel is the best way for students to learn?
5. How do you prepare for your classes? Do you create lesson plans? If so, how do you create them? Why or why not?

6. How do you feel that an ESL instructor should speak? Do you speak differently when lecturing versus when you speak normally in everyday life?
 - a. Why do you do so?
7. How do you normally begin your classes? Do you have procedures? Such as reviewing assignments? If so, what are they?
8. What do you feel is the purpose of this?
9. I notice that the bulk of your lesson the day I observed was mostly lecture. Can you talk to me about your reason for this choice?
 - a. Do you feel that lecturing is the main way in which you teach your students in this class?
 - b. Do you feel that lecturing is more effective than other ways of teaching your students, such as group work, class activities, etc...? Why so?
10. During the class that I observed, you had students work in groups, however many students chose to work alone. Do you feel like this made any difference in how well the students learned and practiced the material for the day?
 - a. What is your opinion of group work?
 - b. How often do you have students work in groups?
 - c. How effective do you feel group work, in general, is for learning?
 - d. Do you feel your own students have success in terms of learning by doing group work in your class? Why or why not?
 - e. I noticed during my observation that you did not seem to visit every student/group while they worked on their chapter quiz. Is this observation accurate?
 - i. If so, was this a conscious decision?
 - f. I also noticed that a few students were off task during this group activity. One group in particular seemed to be very off task. You visited this group a couple of times, but it didn't seem like they would stay on task. Is this observation accurate?
 - i. Was it ok for the students to be off task? Why or why not?
 - ii. Do you feel like there was anything else you could do to get these students on task? Why or why not?

11. How active should a teacher be (i.e., what should a teacher do?) when students are participating in group work?
12. What do you feel is the best way for students to learn grammar?
 - a. How can they apply what they learn into their writing?
 - b. Do you feel that this is something you address in class?
13. Talk to me about the role that specific grammar practice may have on developing students' abilities to write more effectively in their academic writing, particularly their own essay writing.
 - a. How does grammar practice translate or not translate into improved student writing?
14. Teachers often find it necessary to depart from a planned lesson for various reasons. Did you find it necessary to depart from your own lesson? If so, what provoked that departure?
 - a. Do you ever depart from a planned lesson? If so, what provoked it?
15. What is your opinion about error correction as it relates to language errors? What role/purpose do you feel error correction plays in language learning?
 - a. I noticed that in the lesson I observed, it seemed like you would kind of try to talk students towards the right answer, but ultimately you would give them the correct answer. Is this observation accurate?
 - i. If so, do you feel that it is better to give students the answers directly instead of having them arrive at the right answer themselves? Why or why not?

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